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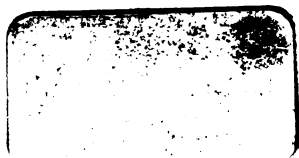
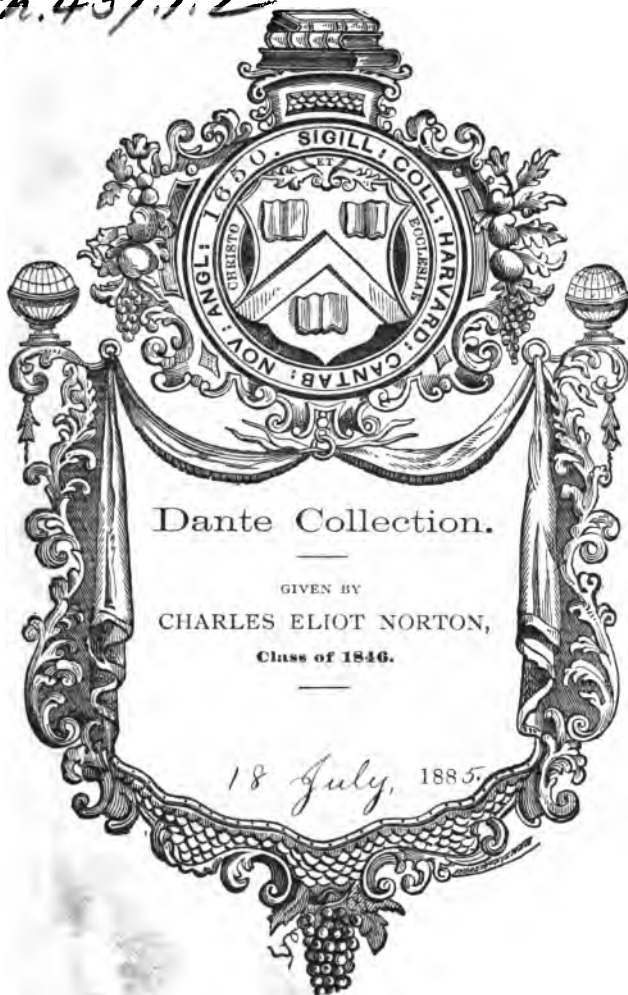
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Vol. II. 7112
Mazzinghi, F. J.

A brief notice of some
recent researches respecting
Dante Alighieri.

London. 1844.

Don. 437.1.2



On 407.1.2

Cover



662

C. E. Norton.

London, 1890.

From Seymour Kirkup's library with
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*Ritratto di Dante Alighieri:
all'Età di 25 anni. Dipinto da Giotto
verso il 1290 nella Cappella del Podestà a
Firenze, scoperto il 21 Luglio 1840.*

Publ. in Londra da P. Rolandi al N.º 20 Berners Street 1844.

A

BRIEF NOTICE

OF SOME

RECENT RESEARCHES

RESPECTING

DANTE ALIGHIERI.

de
BY THOMAS JOHN [^]MAZZINGHI, M.A.



LONDON :
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MDCCCXLIV.

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LONDON:
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PREFATORY REMARKS.

SOME years ago the attention of the writer of the following pages was directed to the zealous care with which every fact and detail tending to throw light upon the life and works of Dante was collected by the living Literati of Germany and France. In seeking information upon the subject, he in vain turned for assistance to the periodical or permanent Literature of this country. He found little that was calculated to explain or illustrate the movement that was taking place,—no notice of the labours of Fraticelli, Troya, Tommaseo or Balbo,—no account of Professor Witte's interesting publication, "*Dantis Aligherii Epistolæ quæ extant*," or of the important discovery of additional letters and sonnets made by the same erudite German scholar within the last few years. Dante's wife had here scarcely ceased to be regarded as a virago; his political and religious sentiments as hopeless problems.* His wanderings were ill ascertained—

* No question has more divided opinion than the consistency of Dante's conduct. Did his sentiments yield to the course of circumstances and accommodate themselves to events, in his own beautiful language,—

"Come la fronda che flette la cima
Nel transito del vento e poi si leva
Per la propria virtù che si sublima?"

Parad. XXVI. 85.

or did he, careless of men's thoughts, stand like the tower firm, that never inclines its head to the blast of the wind—

"Vien dietro a me e lasciar dir le genti
Sta come torre ferma, che non crolla
Giammai la cima per soffiar de' venti?"

Purgat. V. 13.

The Poet's nature was obstinate and determined,—his trials many and severe, such as palsy the nerve, and occasion the premature death. In the latter part of his life he appears to have been willing, upon any terms, not positively humiliating, to accept his recal from exile. Did his native resolution yield to or resist the pressure? Was he the flexible bough, or the unbending tower?

his prose works neglected—his minor poems little known, and their authenticity not discriminated. Some of the facts collected with much personal labour by the accurate and pains-taking Pelli, had even escaped the attention of Foscolo,—a writer, it is true, not unlikely to be repelled by a work so barren of imagination, however useful to the historian, as the “*Memorie per servire alla Vita di Dante.*”

The residence of Foscolo in this country, his different contributions to British Reviews, as well as his fervent and persuasive eloquence, had undoubtedly rendered the subject in some degree attractive even to the English reader, still many years have elapsed since death closed the feverish career of that distinguished scholar: many important discoveries have since been made. Under these circumstances it occurred to the writer, that he might usefully draw up a brief account of what was being done upon the subject, indicating, as he proceeded, the sources from which more ample information might be obtained.*

Like the “*Phædrus*,” the principal Allegory of the “*Commedia*” has been invested, at the will of its various expositors, with an ethical or political, a real or mystical meaning. A recent writer has sought to deal with Dante in the same mode in which the Athenian Philosopher was treated by the Alexandrian Platonists, whose aim it was, to use an expression of a late Oxford Professor, to convert a *religious philosophy* into a *philosophical religion*. It is sought to interpret Dante by Plato. But no intellect, however great, can be admitted as a measure of that of the sovereign Poet: or, if his opinions are to be squared to any favourite system, why not to that of Aristotle, to whose philosophy he would seem to have been more especially attached? In a well known passage of the “*Inferno*,” the Stagyrice, termed “*il maestro di*

* It is necessary to mention, in excuse of the positive tone in which some of the ensuing observations are conceived, that they appeared in a periodical publication.

color chi sanno," is the only one "tra la filosofica famiglia," represented as *seated*, the object of admiration and reverence to *all*. Socrates and Plato are placed nearest to him; but even they are not invested with the dignity and authority indicated by the sitting position. The composition of the earlier cantos of the Poem, in which the passage occurs, must, it is true, be referred to the former period of Dante's life, *i. e.* previous to his exile. The Theological portion of his great work was still unwritten. He is said to have devoted much time subsequently to study in the University of Paris; and it may be that he saw reason to change his relative estimate of the great lights of classical antiquity. We find him later in life explaining or apologizing for a passage in the "Timæus," alluding to the return of the soul to the ruling star of its destiny:—

" E forse sua sentenza è d' altra guisa
Che la voce non suona, ed esser puote
Con intenzion da non esser derisa."

Parad. IV. 55.

Had he been as familiar with the writings of Plato, as, through the medium of translations, or by means of the text itself, he certainly was with those of Aristotle, it is difficult to believe that he would not have placed the favourite philosopher of the fathers, the most Christian of Heathens, in his Paradise, by the side or in lieu of Trajan or Ripheus.

Plato, formed for meditation, not action,

" Similmente operando all' artista
Ch' ha l' abito dell' arte e man che trema,"

Parad. XIII. 77,

has been termed rather the Cranmer than the Luther of his age. Dante united the contemplative and the active virtues. They resemble each other, nevertheless, in many striking particulars.

- Both attached the very highest importance to the traditions of

antiquity, and the teaching of authority. Both attacked the abuses and corruptions of their age and country: the impassioned temperament of the Italian discovering itself by the constant adoption of the boldest strains of invective; the cautious disposition of the Greek venturing at most upon the polished irony, or merely leaving the wished-for conclusion to be drawn by the reader on a comparison of the arguments of a dialogue composed with a real or a specious impartiality. The actual position of these two great reformers was not dissimilar: placed in two republics,—the one subjected to popular, the other to aristocratical tyranny,—they were eye-witnesses to the mode in which it reacted upon society; they beheld a most flagitious state of public morals reflected back upon private life and aggravating its evils and its miseries. They looked for a remedy; and whilst the practical and energetic mind of the *Poet* beheld it in the appeal to the military force of a foreign, a titular Sovereign, the fancy of the *Philosopher* saw it in the realization of his ideal Republic. Possessing each abilities of the highest order, penetrating, comprehensive, catholic, how was it possible for either to sever the consideration of a political from that of a moral reform? how could either omit to insist upon that universal bond which cements the fabric of human society, and knits the brotherhood of man—that “civil” bond which the Poet, in a remarkable passage of his “Banquet,” (the *Convito*,) identified with and expressed by the emphatic designation—“Religione?”

Foscolo seems to have carefully collected in the course of his literary career, notices of various Dante MSS., not only in Italy, but in this country, and left at his death a descriptive account headed “Notizie e pareri diversi intorno a forse 200 Codici,” which appears in the recent edition published by Rolandi; but Foscolo left the Catalogue imperfect, and 66 alone are there given. He admits that the only MSS. which he had personally

examined, were those known as the Roscoe and Mazzuchellian. He affirmed that he had various readings in his possession, extracted for him from four other Codices in the libraries of Oxford, but omitted to give any detailed account of them until he had had an opportunity of confronting them with other celebrated copies in that University and in private libraries in England,—a task to which he appears to have looked forwards with horror. Singular enough, it would seem that he never had his attention directed to the MSS. preserved in the greatest and most famous library in this country—that of the British Museum. Of these the following is a brief enumeration.

1. Amongst the Lansdowne MSS. (1839) a folio copy of the “Commedia” on vellum, written towards the close of the 15th century, with a brief marginal description of the contents of each canto. It has on the first leaf two small portraits of the author, ill executed, and injured by the damp; it was purchased at Dr. Askew’s sale for seven guineas, and is written in a legible hand by an apparently accurate copyist.

2. Amongst the Harleian MSS. (3459) a paper book in folio, to which more particular attention will presently be given.

3. Harl. MSS. (3460). A paper book, written in a kind of print hand, comprising the “Commedia.” It is preceded *first* by some introductory verses, of which the following may serve as a sample:—

“ Però che sia più frutto e più diletto
A quei che si dilettan di sapere
De l’ alta commedia vero intelletto,” &c. &c. ;

and *secondly*, by the Prologue of Jacopo.

The first 20 Cantos of the “Inferno” are illustrated with rude drawings of the subjects in the margin. At the end of the entire poem the volume is stated to have been written “per me Mar-

tinum de Bonseignoribus de Archuli laudensis, anno 1469, die XX mensis Octobris, in die Veneris etc., Deo gratias Amen." Subjoined is Dante's Credo, which has frequently been printed.

4. Harl. MSS. (3478). A paper volume of the 15th century, described in the Catalogue as containing poems of Dante and Petrarch, "of which some of the former are not in the Venice edition." They were, however, all previously in print.

5. Harl. MSS. (3488). A handsome folio volume, written on vellum in the Gothic letter, containing the "Inferno" and the first 20 Cantos of the "Purgatorio," with a copious commentary.

6. Harl. MSS. (3513). The "Commedia," elegantly written on vellum of the 15th century, and illuminated; it has a portrait of Dante at the commencement. There are copious notes written in a more modern hand at the beginning and end. Annexed we again encounter the Capitolo of Jacopo, and the book concludes with Dante's Life by Leonardo Aretino.

7. Harl. MSS. (3581). Another copy of the "Commedia," with brief marginal notes, dated 1464, by the transcriber himself. Subjoined are Dante's well known epitaph, the Capitoli of Jacopo and of Bosone da Gubbio, and some verses on the death of Dante, only remarkable as giving colour to the controverted report as to the cause of his death. He is said to have been appointed Ambassador to Venice, and failing to realize the object of his mission, to have died from disappointment,—a story difficult to be believed of one whose whole career subsequent to his exile had been one of repeated trials and hardships. The book concludes with a sonnet by Cino da Pistoja, and one in reply by Bosone da Gubbio.

8. Additional MSS. (10317). A small volume, on erased parchment, written in a clear hand, by an accurate copyist. It contains the whole of the Comedy, with brief marginal notes, historical, philological, or explanatory. Appended is the well

known Epitaph of the Poet, said to have been written by himself, commencing,

“ Jura monarchiæ,” &c. &c.

It was bought at Florence, in 1815, by the late Lord Glenbervie, was afterwards in the Heber Collection, from which it passed, by purchase, to the British Museum. It is regarded as a valuable copy, and is cited in the edition de Romanis. From a note at the end, written by Professor Ciampi, it appears that that medieval scholar refers it to the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century. This is the only MS. in the British Museum that tallies with Attacanti's reading of the verse respecting Semiramis, in the 5th Canto of the “Inferno,” to which more particular attention will presently be given.

9. Egerton MSS. (943). A splendid folio volume, on parchment, slightly wormed, with illuminated miniatures throughout, about 300 in number. It is considered by far the most valuable copy in the British Museum, on account of its antiquity, its legibility, its elaborate pictorial decorations, its various readings, and the Latin Commentary (author unknown), which accompanies the text as far as the middle of the 12th Canto of the “Paradiso.” It appears, from a memorandum prefixed, that it was submitted, in 1815, to the judgment of some parties attached to the Library at Parma, who, although they had not time allowed them to make a minute examination, nevertheless referred it to the 14th century, and pronounced it to be one of the most valuable copies extant. In addition to the great Poem it also comprises the “Capitolo,” known as Jacopo's. It was purchased from Baron Koller, by Messrs. Payne and Foss, of Pall Mall, from whom it was bought by the Trustees, and added to the Egerton MSS. The taste of the artist, or perhaps it should rather be said of the age, may be judged from the following specimens. The commencement of the “Purgatorio” is

preceded and meant to be illustrated by a small picture, representing the Poet alone in an antique galley, at full sail, seated (*celsa in puppi*),

“ Per córrer miglior acqua alza le vele
Omái la navicella del mio ingegno.”

Again the Illustrator, more daring than his Author,

“ Non éran da ciò le proprie penne,”

has ventured to body forth the sublime conception at the close of the “Paradiso,” and has given a palpable existence to the first person of the Trinity.

Another MS. copy of the Comedy, said to be of an early date, is in the possession of Mr. Rodd, bookseller ; it is partly deficient, and subjoins a portion of the “Capitolo” of Jacopo.

With the exception of the 8th, the writer is not aware that any of these copies has ever been collated.

DANTE ALIGHIERI.

—◆—
 “Alcuni lo chiamarono sempre Poeta, altri
 Filosofo, e molti Teologo, mentre che visse.”

Boccaccio, *Vita di Dante*.

THE varied powers which, according to Boccaccio, constituted Dante the wonder of his contemporaries, continue to the present hour to furnish a study to the followers of Poesy, Philosophy, and Theology. “Dante,” says Lamartine, “is essentially the Poet of our epoch.”—“Si l’on jette un coup d’œil sur le XIX^e siècle, on voit Dante grandir en gloire, et devenir le roi de la littérature.” These are the words of his most recent biographer, a French writer well versed in the language, history, and literature of the Peninsula. His opinion is countenanced by the fact, that during the last 40 years the presses of Italy, France, and Germany* have teemed with the writings of the great Florentine; that in that period there have appeared no fewer than 80 editions of the “Divine Comedy” alone.† The character of M. Artaud for careful research, and the manuscript wealth of the French libraries, led to the hope that his recent work would throw light upon that dark period of the Poet’s life when he was residing in the French metropolis. He is said to have composed a commentary there upon the Scriptures, and also to have written much in that language. But although M. Artaud regards such documents as probably existing, his inquiries have failed to establish the fact. This biographer is a zealous advocate of the Church of Rome.‡ A recent critic rather admires than approves of the enthusiasm of his countrymen in favour of the great poem: he seeks, an ambitious attempt, to hold the balance between the genius of the Poet and the idolatry of his worshippers;—he is at a loss to discover any sufficient analogy between his age and our own to account for the re-action;—he ridicules M. Artaud for having suggested the expediency of instituting a professorship for the exposition of the “Divine Comedy” in Paris;—he regards

* England, although in a lesser degree, has felt the impulse. Mr. Wright’s recent version must give pleasure to all English readers of the “Comedy;” it is at once so nervous and so faithful, that few will be disposed to regret that he has voluntarily subjected himself to the additional difficulties of the *Terza Rima*. We notice, however, that even Mr. Wright has viewed his text through the medium of a theory; with him the abuse becomes the practice, the part the whole. See his notes, *passim*. Thus the Porco Sant’ Antonio is understood as typifying the whole church. See his notes to the “Paradiso,” Canto XXIX.

† Artaud, *Hist. de Dante*, p. 533, ed. Par. 1841. He enumerates all the editions, about 180 in number.

‡ The hasty expression imputed to an Oxford Professor, has not escaped his attention—“*Tendimus in Latium*.”

the political career of its author as too insignificant for the consideration of the historian ;—he looks upon the “ Treatise de Monarchiâ,” the echo of the sentiments of the leading civilians of that epoch, as proof that Dante had been living in another world,—he styles it as much a vision as the “ Divine Comedy;” —and, finally, he cites a passage from the “ Vita Nuova” as evidence of the Poet’s insanity :—such is the criticism of M. Labitte.*

Early in the last century, the “ Divine Comedy”† had obtained so many commentators, that Hardouin found little new to be said on the subject, but to deny the universal tradition which pointed to Dante as its author. This position he had the face boldly to maintain in print ; and when censured for his conduct, admitted with rare honesty his true motive. “ Est-ce que vous croyez que je me lève toujours à trois heures pour répéter les choses dites par les autres ? ” He yielded to the propensity which has in matters of deeper moment betrayed the cause of truth, and led men of otherwise conscientious principles to give way to the fascination of a brilliant paradox. With such commentators, no wonder that a century ago a hundred volumes were required to contain the text of the Poet and the annotations of his expositors. But Hardouin was not merely guilty of a literary crime; he may be impeached for what Fouché would have regarded as far worse, a literary blunder. The field of legitimate criticism, of loyal interpretation, was by no means exhausted ; the indefatigable researches of Dionisi and Pelli had yet to be made; the ever ingenious, if not always undeniable, solutions of Lombardi, Foscolo, Biagioli, Arrivabene and Rossetti, still remained to be supplied ; nor had a Balbo collected into one harmonious narrative the results of the various labours of preceding writers. The more humble, although still important, department of philological illustration was then, as it still continues, comparatively uncultivated by Italians,‡—a circumstance which has led

* *Révue des Deux Mondes*, tom. XX. quatr. série, p. 134.

† The title now prefixed to the great poem is not the one intended by the author. See his dedication of the “ Paradise ” to Can Grande. It has been restored by Ugo Foscolo, and runs thus :—“ Incipit Commedia Dantis Allagherii Florentini natione non moribus.” The epithet Divine, in accordance with the scholastic practice, might be used to express the excellence of a work in which was condensed so much of the school Theology. Angelic, Seraphic, were, it is well known, epithets used by the Scholastics to designate two of their most accomplished Doctors. Had Dante written nothing but his greatest work, the epithet applied to the *poem* might have been transferred by his contemporaries to the *man*. We find the following title prefixed to one of the earliest printed editions, 1477 :—“ Comincia la prima parte chiamata Inferno della Commedia del venerabile Poeta Dante Alighieri.” Manuscript copies of the 14th century in the libraries of Venice prefix the epithet Divine.

‡ A letter by Giuseppe Bernardoni upon the various readings of the early commentator Francesco Buti, has however recently appeared. Milan. 1842.

them to fear that their German neighbours would appropriate this like many other branches of their erudition;* nor is their apprehension ill founded, when we consider the well-known character of the literati of modern Germany, and the various Professorships for the exposition of Dante, founded in five different universities of that country, at Berlin, Bonn, Königsberg, Breslau, and Halle.

Except during the interval which the seicentisti appropriated to themselves, and isolated as it were from the literary history of their country, the "Divine Comedy" has constituted a favourite subject of study. We find, it is true, Guicciardini,† in the earlier part of the 16th century, complaining in a familiar letter to Macchiavelli of the difficulty he had in procuring a copy; but it was a time of extraordinary political convulsions, and the fact may rather prove that the infant press did not keep pace with the demand.‡

In later times Dante's patriotism as a citizen, his gracefulness and learning as a writer, have met with expositors in Perticari, Cesari, and Gozzi, at the same time that the harmony of his versification, and the turn of his expressions, have been studiously and avowedly imitated by Alfieri,§ and by Monti.¶ The fanciful task of penetrating the meaning of the allegories has exercised the ingenuity of men of admitted ability. Whilst Marchetti has endeavoured to solve the enigma of the "selva oscura," Troya and Azzolino and Di Cesare have studied to penetrate the mystical meaning of the *veltro*, or hound.¶ By a bolder system of interpretation, Rossetti, Wright, Vecchioni, and Lyell recognize in the Poet the precursor of the Reformation; Azzolino, the champion of civilization; Scolari and Zinelli, the apostle of Roman

* Balbo, *Vita di Dante*, tom. II. p. 359.

† *Lettere Familiari di Macchiavelli*. Guicciardini, in a letter of the 16th Dec. 1525, tells us that he met at last with the text, but not the gloss.

‡ The first printed edition which gave the title it now bears, "*Divina Commedia*," was published at Venice, A.D. 1516. *It was the 29th*. See Artaud, *Histoire de Dante*, p. 500, et seq., where he enumerates the various editions.

§ Alfieri marked the verses in the Comedy which struck him by their sublimity, beauty, or harmony; the result was that he noted nearly half of the whole number—2273 in the *Inferno*, 2544 in the *Purgatorio*, and 1119 in the first 1119 cantos of the *Paradiso*; he left the residue unnoticed.

¶ *Dialogo su i Poeti de' Primi Secoli della Lingua Italiana*.

¶ By the *veltro*, the liberator of Italy, whose identity has exercised the ingenuity and criticism of so many writers, Fraticelli conjectures that Dante meant to typify different individuals according as the current of political events influenced his hopes. Thus the various writers who contend for the claims of Uguccione della Faggiuola, Can Grande, and Henry VII., may be all to a certain extent in the right. Di Cesare, claiming to be supported by the authority of Kopisch and of Guiniforte delli Bargiggi, understands by the *veltro*, not a temporal but a spiritual liberator, whom he recognizes in Benedict XI.—a conclusion which seems to deserve consideration. See *Progresso delle Scienze Lettere ed Arti*, vol. XXX. p. 169. Napoli.

Catholicism ;—Martini has traced in the language of the Trilogy the sentiments of an eclectic philosopher ; Bruce Whyte has viewed its author as the proficient in the langues d'oil and d'oc,—as the founder, not of the Italian language, but of Italian poetry ;* —Targioni Tozzetti has seen in him the observant botanist ;—M. Libri has claimed for him the appreciation or suspicion of truth, ordinarily regarded as the original discoveries of later ages.† Arrivabene has detected in the poem the history of the poet and his age ;—Foscolo has used his personal history and that of his time as the key to the elucidation of the poem ; Tommaseo, on the other hand, has sought it in the favourite volumes of the Poet (the Scriptures, Virgil, Aristotle,‡ and St. Aquinas), and in the earliest commentary ;—Missirini has written a succinct account of the memorials of Dante existing in his native city ; and, finally, Balbo has founded a claim to the gratitude of all future students and readers of the “Divine Comedy,” by a lucid and judicious biography of its author ;—the labours of Ginguenè, Mérian, Dreuille, Fauriel, Lenormand, Villemain, Delacluze, Ampère, Artaud, Brizeu, Schlegel,§ Ozanam, Bruce Whyte, Aroux, Fiorentino, in France ; of Blanc, Kannegiesser, Streckfuss, Leo, Förster, Köpisch and Witte,¶ in Germany ; of Boyd, Carey, Hallam, Wright, Lyell, and Lord Vernon, in this country,—all attest the general appreciation of the “Sovran Poet ;” —and yet, notwithstanding this expenditure of labour and ingenuity, few will be disposed to censure those who, taking the book itself into their hands, seek to elicit its meaning, aided only by the light of contemporary history and the details of his life, supplied by some such diligent biographer as Cesare Balbo, who follows, where the text is susceptible of both, the literal rather than the allegorical interpretation—who receives the woman Beatrice—who reverences the tender humanities of her lover, and

* Hist. des Langues Romanes, tom. III. p. 229—337. Paris. 1841. Two positions in this work seem to us inadequately supported : the one regards Petrarch as the *happy* lover ; the other affirms Dante's familiarity with the Greek text of Homer. The simile cited as proof, tom. III. p. 236, was more probably borrowed from Virgil's first Georgic. The poet on one occasion is thought to have admitted his ignorance of the Greek text of Aristotle : see the Convito, tom. I. p. 75, ed. Fir. 1834 ; but in those days books were rare and costly,—Dante, an exile, and without money ; and the passage will have no bearing upon the controversy, if it be assumed as his meaning, that he cited translations, not at the moment having access to the original.

† Hist. des Sciences Mathématiques, tom. II. p. 165, ed. Paris, 1838.

‡ How frequently the writings of Aristotle furnished the source of the thoughts of Dante is traced in the commentary of Tommaseo. Venez. 1837. “The Aristotelian philosophy, says Dante, now holds as it were the government of the whole world in matters of doctrine, so that it may be termed Catholic Opinion.” Convito. Opere Minori, tom. II. p. 369, ed. Fir. 1835-40.

§ In the *Révue des Deux Mondes*, 15 Août, 1836.

¶ To the list may be added a writer assuming the name “Philaethes,” in whom is generally recognized a member of a reigning house,—Prince John, Duke of Saxony.

every trait tending to fix both as members of the great family of mankind. It seemed to be Dante's design throughout his great poem to rear an imaginative structure upon a foundation of fact; the individuals who figure in his great drama are contemporary, historical, or scriptural. Shall Beatrice be received as the only exception?

The halo which rests round all that the great Florentine wrote, subsequently to his passing the "mezzo cammin" of his life, has thrown into comparative obscurity his feelings, opinions, and political conduct in earlier days. Dante the Guelf is less generally known than Dante the Ghibellin. In the *latter* capacity he is represented to us as an exiled noble of broken, at last of desperate fortunes—a houseless wanderer, too proud occasionally even to conceal his contempt of those to whose bounty he was compelled to appeal, and feeding his lofty aspirations by contemplating the mysteries of another world. In the *former* character he appears before us not merely as the political partisan, but as the lover, the husband, and the poet in the morning of his reputation; he lays a strong claim to our admiration as a patriot struggling resolutely, although unsuccessfully, for the interests of his country; he engages our sympathy for the unhappy event of his first attachment, and, for the marriage by which he became connected with a family, afterwards his bitterest political opponents. Such is Dante the Guelf, the Dante of the "Vita Nuova," and of the recently restored fresco by Giotto.

An attentive consideration of the conduct of the great Poet at different periods of his career, based upon the various documents with which we have been furnished by recent mediæval antiquarians, must lead all who are not biassed by the splendour of his poetry to the conclusion, that in his first political opinions, he was a better citizen and more amiable man than when, impelled by his resentment against individuals, and his despair of any just commutation of his sentence, he embraced a policy which sacrificed the cause of the national independence of Italy. "The biographer," says Balbo, "who attempts to write the life of an individual, as in every respect blameless, ought to select his subject from the Angelic Choir, or at least to single out one of those rare beings, at once pure, humble and angelic, whose very virtues impel them to withdraw from the popular gaze. Of these the public know little or nothing. Such perhaps was Beatrice, but such certainly was not her lover—still less after her loss."

To form any satisfactory notion of the character and conduct of Dante the *Guelf*, it is necessary to regard him with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded, and the events which occurred during his early life. The families of the Lisei and the Alighieri were descended from a common ancestor who

claimed an ancient Roman descent. In the civil dissensions which took place during the 12th and 13th centuries, of which so interesting a description has been handed down in the pages of the earlier chroniclers, the two branches would appear to have embraced opposite sides. The Lisei alone are mentioned by Malispina* (the earliest Florentine historian), and may, therefore, be regarded as the more prosperous and powerful branch. They espoused the Ghibellin—their kinsmen, the Alighieri, the Guelf cause. All the biographers of Dante agree in attributing the sentiments of the Guelf party to his immediate ancestors. Indeed, we have his own testimony to the fact.† Accordingly, we find them now in banishment, now restored to their country; in short, encountering all the vicissitudes of fortune which fell to the lot of their party. From Leonardo Aretin,‡ we learn that Dante, having lost his father in his youth, was confided to the care of one of the most learned and accomplished men of his time, the Guelf Brunetto Latini, who had himself endured the pains of exile, and shared the misfortunes of the political faction to which he had allied himself. The affection of the pupil for his preceptor is clearly avowed in a very remarkable passage in the *Inferno*, which describes their interview, and proves that not even the natural horror of the odious vice for which he is represented as punished, could deter the Poet from evincing his affectionate remembrance of the man.

“Che 'n la mente m'è fitta e ancor m' accora
La cara e buona imagine paterna
Di voi nel mondo, quando ad ora ad ora
M'insegnavate come l'uom s'eterna!”—*Infern.* XV. 28.

——— “for in my mind
Is fixed, and now strikes full upon my heart
The dear, benign, paternal image, such
As thine was, when so lately thou didst teach me
The way for man to win eternity.”—CAREY.

Subsequently to 1266, when the Ghibellins, in one of the revolutions common at that period, were again compelled to give place in Florence to their victorious opponents, Brunetto Latini held under the Guelf government the office afterwards rendered illustrious by Poggio and Macchiavelli, that of Secretary, or Notary, as it was then termed, of the Republic. Under the tutelage of this man, whose qualities as a statesman are eulogised by the historian Villani,§ it cannot be doubted but that the political sentiments in which Dante was bred, would be strengthened

* *Storie Fior.* c. 100.

† *Ediz. Min.* V. p. 50.

‡ *Inf.* X. 46-48.

§ *Murat. Rerum Ital. Script.* XIII. pp. 204, 352.

and confirmed. "And thus," says Balbo,* "with his father, his family, and his first preceptor, all Guelfs, dwelling in a city which had long been attached to that party, and which was at that very epoch, more especially and exclusively devoted to it,—at a time, too, when the Guelfs were at their greatest height of grandeur and prosperity,—the early impressions of Dante must certainly have been entirely Guelf; although, perhaps, even at that early period, tempered in his generous mind, and moderated from all the excesses of that party." But influences of a more potent and stirring description had still to confirm the youthful bias, and to mould the character of the man.

The annals of Florence have furnished a favourite subject of contemplation to three men† of different ages and countries, of commanding abilities, and of various attainments. The statesman, the historian, the orator, have all turned to this fruitful source of instruction. And, indeed, the subject presents political attractions of no common description. But the historical and satirical poem of the "Divine Comedy," so pregnant with allusions to contemporary events, has encircled the annals of the city with such a literary interest, that many have made them their study, in other respects little disposed to devote themselves to the long, and, in some instances, perplexed inquiry into the constitutional revolutions of a Republic, according to Dante, as frequent as those of the moon. His own age, and that which immediately followed, may be regarded as constituting the period of the greatest political and commercial prosperity of Florence.‡ It has been sometimes, but without due reason, referred to a later date. "Some of its citizens were wealthier than reigning princes; two of its banking-houses lent to Edward III. of England,§ a sum equal to about three millions sterling. Its revenue exceeded that of the King of Naples, that of the King of Arragon, and that of the British Queen Elizabeth three centuries later."||

Many of the great works which now arrest the attention of the traveller, were commenced, and some completed, at that epoch; amongst others, the exquisite Campanile by Giotto, the

* Balbo, *Vita di Dante*, tom. II. p. 47.

† Macchiavelli, Gibbon, Thiers. The latter is understood to have been many years engaged upon a History of Florence. Gibbon, at one period, designed to employ his masterly pen upon that subject, and only abandoned it for the work which has constituted him the greatest historian of modern times.

‡ It has been proved by Baron Rumohr, from documents in the archives of the Duomo at Florence, that hamlets in the Florentine territory, which now consist only of three or four farms, were, in the 13th century, villages containing twenty families of hereditary tenants.

§ The English King was readier with his sword than his payments; an expostulatory letter from the Priors of the Republic is preserved in the British Museum, Cott. MSS. Nero, B. VII. Art. 8.

|| Pecchio, *Storia dell' Economia Pubblica in Italia*, ediz. second. p. 14.

magnificent Cathedral, and principal churches. Dante speaks of the pride generated in the minds of the citizens by the sudden influx of wealth, the "subiti guadagni;" but no body of men ever accorded a more liberal aid to the Arts, or made a more generous use of their wealth, than did the Florentine merchants of that age. In 1294, a decree was passed by the public magistracy, for the erection of the Duomo "upon such a scale of lofty and sumptuous magnificence, as to leave it impossible for human industry or power to invent any thing grander or more beautiful;" and the genius of Arnolpho, to whom the work was entrusted, was stimulated by the intimation that the State had determined that its contracts ought not to be undertaken, unless with the view of making the effect correspond with the conception, "che vien fatto grandissimo perchè composto dall' animo di più cittadini uniti insieme in un sol volere."* Indeed, the Cathedral of Florence must be ever regarded as one of the most splendid monuments of the middle ages. Its materials are of costliest description; its dome second to that of the Pantheon alone in diameter.

To form any clear or satisfactory notion of the private or public life of a citizen of a turbulent Italian Republic of the middle ages, rent by internal disturbances, we must figure to ourselves not merely its actual condition and political interests, but those other important influences arising from the friendship or alliances, the animosities or rivalries, of families, and more especially of those dwelling in the same neighbourhood. The Alighieri resided close to the Church San Martino del Vescovo, and in their immediate vicinity dwelt three families, destined to exercise peculiar influence upon the fortunes of the young Dante. These were the Portinari, the Donati, and the Cerchi; from the first he chose his love, from the second his wife, from the third his political associates.

Although the name of Folco Portinari cannot be traced† as an historical one in the annals of Florence, he is commemorated

* The language of exaggeration is, it is true, essentially that of a democracy. "The Americans," says Mr. Tyler, "have a government, *the strongest in the world*, because emanating from the popular will, and firmly rooted in the affections of a great and free people."—*Message of the President of the U. S.* 1842. But he never would have hazarded the expression without a strong conviction of the extraordinary resources of his country.

† According to Fontani, (*Viaggio Pittorico della Toscana*, tome I. p. 245, ediz. 2nd.) Folco di Ricovero Portinari, father of Beatrice, was one of the first four Priors of the Florentine Republic, which magistracy was founded in 1282; but this cannot be so—they were originally only three in number. Malispina, *Storie Fior.* c. 231; Cantini, *Antichità Toscane*, tom. III. c. 1, give the names, which comprise no member of the Portinari family. From the diligent writer last mentioned, it appears that Simone de' Bardi, husband of Beatrice, was a man of political weight at that period, who held offices of importance in Tuscany. *Antich. Toscan.* tom. VI. p. 163, 164.

by all the biographers of Dante, and has deserved the grateful remembrance of his countrymen, as the founder of the magnificent Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. By his wife, Cilia Caponsacchi, he had a daughter, Beatrice, the child and woman of the "*Vita Nuova*," the saint of the "*Divine Comedy*." The first sight of her was to Dante, as he himself affirms, the commencement of a new life, *Incipit vita nova*.* The narrative of Boccaccio recalls to us the youthful attachments of Rousseau and Byron.

Beatrice had barely completed her eighth, Dante was in his ninth year. They met in her father's house, at a festivity in celebration of the commencement of Spring. After detailing her graceful demeanour, her maiden beauty and modesty, in one of those exquisite descriptions which Boccaccio, best perhaps of all writers, knows how to handle, he concludes by telling us, "that child as Dante then was, he received her image into his heart with such intense emotion, that from that time thenceforth he never parted with it to his dying day."

"She appeared before me," says Dante, "clad in a dress," *d'un nobilissimo colore umile ed onesto sanguigno*, "with such a band and ornaments as were becoming at her years. At her sight, I say it in all sincerity, the spirit of life which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart began to tremble so violently, as to render even the minutest pulsations horribly perceptible." Some days afterwards he again meets Beatrice accompanied by two ladies of elder years. She was clad in a dress of exquisite whiteness; she for the first time courteously accosts him; he describes his timidity, and the intoxicating effect produced upon him by her address. Having withdrawn to the solitude of his chamber, he dwells upon the incident which had just occurred: at last he is overtaken by a sweet sleep, when a marvellous vision appears to him, "the vision of the burning heart,"—to which he afterwards gives a poetical form in a sonnet, perhaps the earliest composition of his extant.

Without reference to that enduring monument to the memory of his first love, furnished by Dante in his great poem, there are many passages in his *Canzoniere*, which present such a portrait of female excellence and purity, as would be calculated to satisfy even the most unreasonable aspirations of a man of the loftiest mind and most ardent imagination.

"Ella è quanto ben puo far natura,
Per esempio di lei beltà si prova."

"Nature's masterpiece,
The test and mould of beauty."

* Fraticelli, however, and other writers, give a different sense to the words *vita nova*, which according to them means the period of youth.

Again—

- “Graziosa a vederla,
E disdegnosa, dove si convene;
Umile, vergognosa e temperata,
E sempre a virtù grata,
Intra’ suoi be’ costumi un atto regna,
Che d’ogni reverenza la fa degna.”*
- “Grace is in every look,
And indignation if offence provoke;
Meek, modest, temperate and calm;
To virtue ever dear;
O’er all her noble manners reigns a charm
Which universal reverence inspires.”

From some particulars detailed in a subsequent part of the “*Vita Nuova*,” which will be presently alluded to, it would appear that the Poet had occasion to verify the trait mentioned in the second line of the last extract. From what he affirms in the “*Vita Nuova*,” it appears that he was conscious how much her gentle influence had effected in softening the harsher features of his own character. “As soon,” says he, “as she appeared, a sudden flame of charity was kindled within me; I pardoned all men, and no longer recognized any enemies.” Such was Beatrice, as she has been handed down to us in the verses of her lover: but their destinies were not to be united, and the heroine of the “*Vita Nuova*,” became the wedded wife of a Guelf cavalier, Messer Simone de’ Bardi.† And yet Dante never ceased to cherish the remembrance of his youthful attachment.

“The tie which binds the first endures the last.”

He sang her praises when living, her apotheosis when dead. Censure is disarmed by the undeniable purity of his affection, attested at once by the voice of tradition, by the whole tenor of his great poem and other writings, and by the positive assertion of Boccaccio.‡ In the “*Vita Nuova*,” Dante says that Beatrice

* *Canzoniere*, p. 226, Lyell’s ed. Fraticelli doubts this being the composition of Dante.

† The fact is proved by the will of her father, cited by Pelle (*Memorie per servire alla Vita di Dante*, p. 76.) It bears date January 15, 1287. “Item D. Bici filius suæ et uxori D. Simonis de Bardis reliquit lib. quatuor.”

‡ Those who are fond of tracing how men of empassioned temperaments, but otherwise of widely different modes of thought, approach each other in forms of expression, when they touch upon the subject of love, may contrast the “*Vita Nuova*” with the private Memoirs of Sir Kenelm Digby, written by himself, and recently published by Sir Harris Nicolas, from a MS. in the British Museum. In both, passion is made to speak occasionally the language of allegory, but, as may be expected, it prevails more in the page of the lover than of the husband. The fame of Beatrice Portinari and of Lady Venetia Stanley has been differently dealt with by the voice of their countrymen. Benvenuto d’Imola says, that the former was “*miræ pulchritudinis sed majoris honestatis*,” whereas, according to Clarendon, the latter was a lady of “*extraordinary beauty, and of as extraordinary reputation*.”

was of such "eminent virtue, that upon no occasion did she ever suffer me to be swayed by my passion, so as to slight the faithful counsel of the reason in those matters in which it was profitable to listen to its admonition."* From the same book it appears that she subsequently refused the customary salutation, and avoided him in society: that he was not present at her death is also certain.

The loss of her father, on the 31st of December, 1289, was bitterly deplored by Beatrice, and Dante accounts for it by the remark, "*Questa donna fosse in altissimo grado di bontà*"—a saint on earth. His sympathy for her sufferings seriously impairs his own health,† and he becomes dangerously ill. "On the ninth day, being in intolerable pain, an idea struck me, which was of my lady. After being some time occupied with this subject, my thoughts reverted to my own precarious existence; and considering of how brief a duration it was even in health, I began inwardly to deplore my miserable estate. In an agony of sorrow I said to myself, "*It cannot but be that gentlest Beatrice must sometime die.*" This idea, prompted by the tenderness of his affection, throws him into a frenzy, when he sees in the heavens a multitude of angels singing "*Hosanna in excelsis*;" he afterwards imagines that he beholds Beatrice dead, and that he witnesses the last offices paid to her remains. The illusion under which he was labouring was so intense, that he utters audibly, with profound emotion, "*O, fairest spirit, how blessed he who beholds thee!*" The exclamation is overheard, but not understood; and a lady who is tending him in his sickness, supposed to be his sister of the whole or half-blood, and by himself described as one united to him in the nearest bond of consanguinity, is induced to leave the room by her companions, who fancy him to be suffering in his sleep from the agony of his malady. They accost him thus:—"Awake, and be comforted:" he awakes with the word "*Beatrice*" on his lips, but his voice so broken by his emotions that nothing is articulated. He then relates to them his dream, suppressing, however, the name of its object. The death of Beatrice occurred on the 9th of June, 1290. She was then in her twenty-fourth year, and it would seem in the third of her marriage. The event is thus detailed in the "*Vita Nuova*:"—"How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is she become as a widow that was great amongst the nations! I was on the point of commencing this canzone

* "*Tuttavia era di sì nobilissima virtù che nulla volta sofferse che amore mi regesse senza il fedele consiglio della ragione in quelle cose la ove tal consiglio fosse utile a udire.*"—*Vita Nuova*, p. 4.

† *Vita Nuova*, p. 39.

after having completed the sonnet, when the Lord of that gentlest creature, the Sovereign Lord, I mean, of Righteousness, summoned that noble being to serve him in glory, under the banner of the blessed Queen, the Virgin Mary, whose name had been ever held in highest reverence on the lips of the sainted Beatrice.* And here we cannot refrain from laying before the reader the just indignation with which the biographer Balbo visits the allegorical interpreters of the reality of the narrative. "Barbarous," says he, "are those writers who, in the abruptness of this passage, in the citation from the Holy Scriptures, in the very resignation yet agony implied in the exclamation, 'the Sovereign Lord of Righteousness!' in the delicate and affectionate remembrance of the name familiarly appealed to by his lady when living,—a trait which it is impossible for him to have imagined,—cannot discern indubitable proofs of a real passion."† "It is," says Foscolo,‡ "a fatal consequence of a deserved celebrity in one department of literature, that the author is regarded as incapable of attaining excellence in any other." Boccaccio's fame as a novelist injured his credit as a biographer; and although his near proximity to the time of Dante entitled his testimony to superior weight, the reality of Dante's attachment to Beatrice, based upon the general tradition, the indirect testimony of collateral circumstances, and the plain confession of the Poet himself, was fancifully explained away by the historian Leonardo Aretino; and his interpretation came finally to be believed by no inconsiderable number of his subsequent commentators. It has been revived, and constitutes, in our opinion, the most specious of the hardy theories propounded by Rossetti; but who can read the concluding cantos of the "Purgatorio," which, in one continuous flow of melody, and in verses of incomparable beauty, describe the interview of Dante and Beatrice in the other world, and not recognize, in the latter, the glorified object of an earthly affection, the beatified spirit which controlled "Le belle membra che son terra sparte."

Dante affirms in his "Vita Nuova," that he composed a Serventese, that is to say, a Poem in the Terza Rima, in praise of sixty beautiful ladies of Florence; of these the ninth, he tells us, was Beatrice, the thirtieth the wife of Lapo Gianni. "Who," says Dionisi,§ "can credit that of this number Beatrice alone represented

* Vita Nuova, p. 53.

† Balbo, Vita di Dante, p. 139.

‡ La Commedia illustrata da Ugo Foscolo. London, 1842, vol. I. p. 46. We cannot but regret the terms in which this distinguished writer occasionally expresses himself when speaking of some of the most deserving names in the literature of his country; for instance, Tiraboschi and Metastasio.

§ Anedd. II. p. 43.

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an art, science, or metaphysical abstraction?" Eclecticism is often as profitable in criticism as in philosophy. With respect to the real existence of Beatrice, the difficulty ceases, if we assent to the conclusion that the affection felt during his youth by a poet of ardent imagination, and a highly religious temperament, for a maiden of extraordinary beauty and surpassing purity of character, settled at her death into an enthusiastic veneration of her virtues; in the language of the father, St. Augustin, through whom the scholars of that age imbibed the philosophy of Plato, Dante learnt "amare in creatura creatorem et in factura factorem." *

With respect to Dante's subsequent relations with the Portinari, it is worthy notice that the "descendentes de domo de Eliseis et de domo de Portinariis" and Dante Alighieri are named together in the list of exiles excepted out of the amnesty, Sept. 6, 1311.† Several individuals bearing the name Folcho Portinari appear on the roll of the Cavalieri of the order of St. Stephen of Tuscany.

Two years and a half after this important era in the life of Dante, an event, recorded in the "Vita Nuova," occurred. He was in the 27th year of his age, his lineaments and demeanour those which have been restored to us in the fresco of Giotto, recently brought to light. At this period he presents himself as a young man highly distinguished by all the current accomplishments and erudition of the age, (he had passed through the two courses, the Trivium and the Quadrivium,) the friend of the best poets of the day, of Guido Cavalcanti and Cino da Pistoja, of the painter Giotto, of the musician Casella, the intimate associate of men of elegant and refined taste: he had deserved the gratitude of his country for his services rendered as a Guelf in the bloody field of Campaldino, had acquired a reputation as the author of the most graceful poems then known in the popular language, and was recommended to the gentler sex by the story of his ardent though unfortunate attachment. Speaking of Dante at this early period, Beatrice says,—

* Consult the dissertation of Fraticelli prefixed to his edition of the "Vita Nuova," Opere Minori. Firenze, 1839-40. "Virgile figure la raison non éclairée par la révélation, mais c'est aussi le poète Latin que le moyen âge a révééré comme un grand sage. Beatrix représente la science des choses divines, mais c'est Beatrix Portinari dont la chaste beauté avoit fait sur Dante dès sa première jeunesse une impression profonde. Q'y a-t-il de si inconcevable dans cette combinaison?" These are the words of M. A. W. Schlegel, *Révue des Deux Mondes*, 1836, p. 400, tom. VII. quatrième série. beatrix

† *Delizie degli eruditi Toscani*, tom. V. p. 74; Giano della Bella is also named. See also tom. IV. p. 129, where mention is made of Ricoverus fil. quond. Folchi Portinari Camerarius Cameræ Florentiæ, 1299. He must have been the brother of Beatrice. *Portinari*

" Questi fu tal nella sua vita novella
 Virtüalmente, ch' ogni abito destro
 Fatto averebbe in lui mirabil pruova."

Purg. XXX. 115.

how?

One day an event occurs like that which gave rise to the fatal feud between the Buondelmonti and the Uberti, so familiar to the reader of Florentine history. In passing through the streets of Florence, Dante beholds at a window a young gentlewoman of great beauty, who appears to regard him with an expression of pity,—conduct which she repeats upon subsequent occasions. Her countenance, pale, it might be with love, "*quasi d' amore*," reminds him of the habitual look of his Beatrice. The reminiscence which she suggests begets interest, interest inspires sympathy, and sympathy affection. At last he can hardly tear himself from her side. It is evident that again he has become attached: its object is styled in the "*Vita Nuova*," the "*donna consolatrice*," whom with Balbo we would willingly believe to be no other person than Gemma de' Donati, subsequently his wife. But not to enter upon this debateable ground of controversy, suffice it to remark, that if this conjecture is well founded, his wife could have been no way deceived by him, but must have been aware that she had wedded one whose heart was devoted to the memory of the buried Beatrice. Their youngest child and only daughter was also named Beatrice, a striking proof that the purity of Dante's first attachment was admitted and appreciated by his wife.

The disposition to sympathise with and exaggerate the misfortunes of men of lofty genius, has, it is probable, invested many circumstances in the life of Dante with a false and deceptive character; there is not one where the conclusions drawn appear less based upon facts than those which refer to his wedded life.

In the year 1293, or thereabouts, according to the general opinion, Alighieri, then in the 28th year of his age, was induced by his friends to enter the married state. A suitable, perhaps an ambitious match, presented itself in the person of a lady of one of the principal families, inferior to his only in the single circumstance of antiquity, but superior in all those other particulars which usually recommend a marriage of prudence. Of Gemma de' Donati little is known, but the fact of her marriage with Dante; her having, previously to his banishment, borne to him seven children; and her stay in Florence, after his departure, with her young family; which, according to the narrative of Boccaccio, she brought up with great prudence and good management upon the slender means claimed as her dower out of her husband's possessions, and on that ground rescued from the general confiscation which swept away his property. There is no evidence of

their having lived together, or even met, after his exile ; nor is it known when she died, although undoubtedly she survived her husband. It has been frequently noted, that in no part of the works of Dante is any express mention made of his wife ; and as there is no doubt that she did not share his banishment, these two circumstances have led many to affirm that Dante was unfortunate in his marriage, and that his wife entertained little or no affection for him,—inferences which recent writers have resisted with great force of reasoning, and critical acumen. Boccaccio, after alluding to the inconveniences of the married state, proceeds thus :—“Certainly I do not mean to assert that Dante had to encounter them, for I have no means of knowing that such was the case ; but true it is, whatever the cause, that after he had once separated from her who had been given to him as a consolation in affliction, neither would he go where he was likely to encounter her, nor would he ever permit her to come to him,—and this, notwithstanding she had borne to him many children. Let not any one therefore conclude, from what I have here said, that a man ought not to marry : on the contrary, I regard it as a highly laudable act, although not for every one. Wise men should leave wedlock to the rich, to princes, and to labourers, and should devote themselves to the best spouse of all, philosophy.” In commenting on this passage, Foscolo cites Montaigne, who affirmed that he would not marry “*sagesse elle-même.*” “*J’eusse fuy de l’espouser si elle m’eust voulu :*”

“*Est mihi dulce magis resolutio vivere collo.*”*

With respect to the assertion of Boccaccio, that Dante would never allow his wife to share his exile, the fact may be undeniable, and yet rather a proof of disinterested affection than of any want of it on his part. At first he might fail to summon her to him, buoyed up by the hope of speedily rejoining her in his native city ; he might, taught by the vicissitudes of the factions, cherish the expectation that something might occur to turn the tide of popular sentiment in his favour, or even to occasion his restoration by force. What had he to offer her ?—the lot of a proud and banished noble, of fortunes always precarious, and at last desperate. If the bitterness of his destinies once wrung from his haughty feelings the admission implied in the

“*Tu proverai, si come sa di sale
Il pane di altrui, e come è duro calle
Lo scendere e ’l salir per l’ altrui scale ;*”

Parad. XVII. 58.

* *Essais*, liv. III. chap. De l’Utile et de l’Honneste.

"Thou shalt by trial know what bitter fare
Is bread of others, and the way how hard
That leadeth up and down another's stair ;"

WRIGHT.

what an aggravation of his misery, had his wife and children been the companions of his sad wanderings,—the associates in his humiliating visits ! Conceive the exiled noble attended on these occasions by his wife and seven children, the youngest, the latest daughter of his affections, the infant Beatrice, a child yet in arms ! The frequency of his changes of domicile, in Romagna, Lombardy, and the Lunigiana, as well as in Tuscany, have been well ascertained ; it is credibly asserted that he visited Paris, as, according to some, he did even London and Oxford. Had Gemma Donati absented herself from Florence, where she was, according to the account of Boccaccio, providing for the necessities of her young family with toil to which she had not been bred, "*con disusata industria*," in all probability even the slender stock which she had contrived with difficulty to save from the wreck of her husband's fortune would have been lost ; her own family, his personal enemies, incensed ; and the wretchedness of her husband's situation aggravated. Perhaps, in a city torn by contending factions and harassed by hourly broils, her woman's heart was sorely tried between rival parties and houses, influenced on the one hand by her sisterly and filial affections, by the strength of the prejudices in which she was born—and on the other, by the tender emotions of the mother and the wife.* And Dante, in his appreciation of the struggle which was taking place, may have himself confirmed her in the resolution of abiding in the midst of her relatives, and near those branches of his own family who were not involved in his sentence. Why may not the full consciousness of her excellences have suggested the words which he places in the mouth of Cacciaguida, who foretels his exile, and proceeds thus ?—

"Tu lascierai ogni cosa diletta
Più caramente, e questo è quello strale
Che l' arco dell' esilio pria saetta."

Parad. XVII. 55.

"Thou shalt depart, and from each pleasant thing
Beloved with most affection be debarr'd ;
This arrow first from Exile's bow shall spring."

WRIGHT.

* "Il est difficile," says M. Artaud, (*Hist. de Dante*, p. 3,) "de chercher les querelles d'un mauvais ménage-là, ou en moins de huit ans une femme a donné sept enfans à son epoux." Foscolo had made the same remark.

The precise period when his children joined him is unknown. Certain it is that they were well educated. One of his sons settled in Verona and died in Trèves; another is the author of Commentaries, still extant,* upon the "Divine Comedy;" and his daughter, Beatrice, lived to an advanced age in a monastery in Ravenna. Boccaccio was entrusted with the commission of conveying to her a sum of money from the Florentine Republic.

See Dante

But the other circumstance before alluded to, that Dante nowhere mentions his wife by name, has also occasioned much remark, and been tortured into a proof of indifference. That it is a most striking circumstance is undeniable. Corso Donati, her relative (in what degree is not ascertained), was the first man at that period in Florence,—pre-eminent in ability, in influence and in wickedness,—the representative, says Mr. Hallam, of the turbulent noble of the Italian Republics. He was regarded as one aiming at a tyranny; he was suspected to have poisoned his first wife; he was known to have committed sacrilege. The latter story is thus told by an anonymous commentator:—"Piccarda, sister of Forese and of Messer Corso Donati, and daughter of Messer Simone, although a maiden of excelling beauty, turned her thoughts to God, to whom she made a profession of her virginity, entering with this view the monastery of Santa Chiara. Her brothers had promised to give her in marriage to a gentleman of Florence, by name Rosellino della Tosa; when therefore Messer Corso, at that time Podestà of Bologna, heard of her profession, he left his command, proceeded to the monastery, and, contrary to the wishes of Piccarda herself, of the sisterhood, and of the abbess, forcibly carried her off. Being constrained against her inclinations to take Rosellino for her husband, she immediately fell ill, life became irksome, and having prayed for death, that spouse to whom she had made her profession took her to himself."

And yet this Corso Donati, so conspicuous by his vices, is nowhere named by Dante; his atrocities are, it is true, perpetually alluded to, so that he may be said to be one of the principal of those sculptured figures whom the Poet has fixed for eternal obloquy in his breathing gallery of criminals, one of those unnamed reprobates,

"A mal più che a bene usi,"

who, as Dante well knew, (for he had himself on one occasion been instrumental in procuring the banishment of Corso,) had been the principal cause of the dissensions which distracted his country.

* Of this commentary Filelfo says:—"Non arbitror quemquam recte posse Dantis opus commentari nisi Petri viderit volumen qui ut semper erat eum patre ita ejus mentem tenebat melius." Some, however, doubt its authenticity.

His brother Forese was the bosom friend of the Poet, and his sister Piccarda, of whom Forese says—

“ La mia sorella che tra bella e buona
Non so qual fosse più ;”

Purgat. XXIV. 13.

“ My sister, she for whom
’Twixt beautiful and good, I cannot say
Which name was fitter ;”

CAREY.

is one of those creations of excelling sweetness and purity, whose memory the Poet has embalmed in some of the most perfect passages in his inspired volume. They would alone justify the remark of Lord Byron, that there is no tenderness equal to the tenderness of Dante.

From the circumstances above adverted to, Foscolo and Balbo infer that the constant omission of the name of Corso Donati may be referred to the disinclination of the Poet to wound the feelings of his wife; still, in spite of the ingenious reasoning of the former writer, Dante has told many an event in the public or private lives of his contemporaries by mere allusions, without specifying names.

Foscolo, in his generous remarks upon the injustice done to the character of Dante’s wife by previous writers, suggested, in aid of his argument, that she might have died shortly after his exile. After this remark had been acquiesced in, or at least not disputed, by subsequent writers, we confess we were sorry to find that it was clearly disproved by an interesting document cited by the indefatigable Pelli,* (a writer at whom Foscolo sneered, and whom he probably never read,) which establishes beyond the possibility of a doubt that Gemma survived her husband, but was not living A.D. 1332. These facts have, we believe, escaped the notice of all the recent biographers.

His children’s names were Piero, Jacopo, Gabriello, Aligero, Eliseo, Bernardo, and Beatrice. Scipio Maffei, in his “ Verona Illustrata,” has preserved some memorials of the branch which settled at Verona.

There is something that strikes the imagination in the mode in which the lineal descendants of the great Poet indicated their family,—Dante II., Dante III.,—as if their stock had been a royal one. So they are still to be seen designated on their tombs

* Pelli, *Memorie per servire alla Vita di Dante Alighieri*, pp. 34—5, in note. To the instrument in question, dated 16th May, 1332, Francesco, the brother, and Piero and Jacopo, the sons of Dante, are parties; it alludes to the dower, “ *Dominæ Gemmæ viduæ, olim matris dictorum Jacobi et Petri, et uxoris olim dicti Dantis, et filię olim Domini Manetti de Donatis.*”

in Verona, where the direct male line became extinct in the 17th century; the family is now believed to be represented by a house styling itself Aligeri, and claiming through a female. *known*

If from the house of the Donati Dante selected his wife, he chose his political associates from a family occupying a rival station to that with which he had thus allied himself. The family of the Cerchi, in point of wealth and influence, stood at that time highest in popular favour; but those advantages were compensated in favour of the Donati by the greater energy, accomplishments, and popular recommendations of their chief, Corso, who is described by contemporary historians as a second Catiline,—according to Villani,* the most prudent and valiant cavalier, the most eloquent speaker, the best man of business, and the most renowned for daring and enterprise, then in Italy. The origin of Corso's enmity with the Cerchi is variously related. According to some, his first wife, a sister of Vieri de' Cerchi, was poisoned by her husband at Trèves; and it is said that the brother being subsequently present at a banquet given by Corso, the latter caused the wine to be first tasted before it was handed to his guests, upon which Vieri exclaimed, "It was not thus that you caused the cup to be presented to my sister." To this speech was attributed their reciprocal enmity. Without, however, insisting upon the authenticity of this story, a satisfactory cause may be readily found in the character of the two men who were the respective leaders of the ultra and the moderate Guelfs, and afterwards of those factions of the Neri and the Bianchi, into which the former eventually merged. Corso aimed at a tyranny, whilst it was the object of Vieri to preserve the constitutional privileges of the Guelf republic. Corso sought to render the greater and more ancient families, whom with this view he studiously courted, the instruments of his ambition; whereas Vieri exercised only that moderate influence over the minds of the middle class, to which his character, his station, and his wealth had given him a legitimate claim.

At the time when Dante was first involved in the political dissensions of his country,—fixing such event as contemporary, or nearly so, with his marriage, A.D. 1292,—the Guelf party had been for many years in the ascendant. Originally it comprised in its ranks only a section of the ancient nobility; but it had contrived, during the continuance of the struggle, to associate to itself not only the greater proportion of the wealthy burgesses, by whom the cause was regarded as that of public tranquillity, but also numbers of the lower classes, weary of the oppressions and

* Villan. p. 369.

overbearing conduct of the old patrician houses, and attached by interest or affection to their immediate employers, upon whom they were dependent for their daily support. When, however, the faction, compounded of these heterogeneous materials, had succeeded in finally overthrowing their opponents, the Ghibellins, Florence soon presented another instance of what Macchiavelli regarded as a necessary proof of its extraordinary prosperity ;— the successful party divided itself afresh into rival factions ; the one distinguished by the same tyrannical and overbearing conduct which had rendered the Ghibellins so unpopular, the other adhering to those more moderate principles which had ensured the triumph of their party when united.

It is probable that the dissensions which ensued, arose only out of the collision of party interests, without any reference to the public good ; for after repeated demonstrations of popular discontent, a revolution occurred, which was guided to its completion by a noble of ancient family. By the new constitution which he introduced, the ancient noble families, termed by contemporary historians "*i grandi*," and explained to include those only which had ever been illustrated by the order of Knighthood, were all placed under a severe system of civil restrictions ; their names were entered upon a roll called the Ordinances of Justice ; the immediate effect being that they lost all political rights, and were placed in a most disadvantageous position before the law. Their situation has been aptly compared to that of the Irish Catholics under the full severity of the penal code,* and the same necessity may be regarded with equal reason perhaps as palliating the original harshness of each enactment. Dante, as will be seen, was matriculated at a later period in one of the Arts or Companies, in order to evade the rigor of this law : this was a nominal resignation on his part of his ancestral pretensions ; and as we find him, in the "*Paradise*," mentioning *Giano della Bella*, the author of the revolution, in terms of apparent commendation, it is probable that he regarded the change then introduced as salutary and necessary ; and although it unavoidably led to the exclusion of many of the Guelfs from power, still it offered no violation to the principles by which the entire party professed to be governed.

About the time when the Guelfs had risen triumphantly over their opponents, in order to consolidate their power on a firm foundation, and secure themselves against the consequences of any open attempt or intrigue on the part of their fallen adversaries, they formed, as an important political engine for the con-

* Bowyer's Statutes of Italy, p. 39.

trol and efficient management of their party, to whose power union was an essential but a difficult condition, a secret society, destined for the future, as long as the Republic lasted, to exercise a species of *imperium in imperio* over its fortunes. It was styled the Guelf Club, and was represented by a President or Captain, afterwards invested with important privileges in the state. The society itself exercised the functions of a censorship; depriving citizens of their political rights by a process called "warning," "ammonizione," affixing to them the opprobrious epithet "Ghibellins," and stripping them as such of all their privileges and franchises. The Guelf Club appears in some subsequent instances to have usurped the office of negotiating, intriguing perhaps we should rather say, with foreign powers; it virtually became the controlling administration of Florence.* The two parties into which the original Guelfs had, as we before mentioned, divided themselves under the leadership of Corso Donati and Vieri de' Cerchi, were both of them represented in the Guelf Club, which probably ranked amongst its members all the principal aristocratical and burgher families of that party. The greater energy and more persuasive powers as an orator of Corso would most likely give him, and through him, his faction, the preponderating influence in the deliberations of this secret society; and so long as Vieri remained a member he would be thus constrained against his will to follow the policy of his rival, Corso, which tended to his own aggrandisement, and that of a few of the leading nobles, and the debasement of the rest of the citizens. Against such a policy the just and generous mind of Vieri revolted; and finding his wishes thwarted and his influence neutralized in this then novel society, he adopted the bold and dangerous measure of withdrawing himself and party from its meetings. In this position, pressed on the one hand by the influence of the faction of Corso, and on the other by the already organized body which represented the simply popular interests, Vieri and his friends stood in peril of being crushed in the conflict of interests, unless they could contrive to strengthen themselves by an infusion of new elements of life and vigour. This they proposed to effect by a coalition with the liberal party,—an object only to be obtained by a sacrifice of their nominal privileges of nobility. The union took effect; Vieri de' Cerchi, Dante, and their friends coalesced with the popular party, which had

* Two centuries later we find Donato Giannotti, in a letter to Niccolo Capponi, thus speaking of this magistracy:—"The title, Guelf Party, is neither profitable nor honourable in the city—it is a sign that divisions have existed in it; it would therefore be necessary to change the name, to do away with the opinion that the city is more Guelf than Ghibellin."—*Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani*, XXXIII. p. 163.

virtually become dominant in the state. They were inscribed as members in the different Arts or Companies,—they recovered, in short, their political rights: in so doing there is no reason to believe that they contemplated any dereliction of principles; but their withdrawal from the Guelf Club would naturally be tortured for factious purposes into a secession from the original principles of the party, and the charge might derive additional colour from an event which afterwards occurred. It is a disastrous circumstance for a state, whenever private animosities are capable of being converted into public quarrels,—a calamity of which the history of Florence presents us with repeated instances. From a family feud sprung the fatal political faction of the Bianchi and the Neri. With the former Vieri de' Cerchi and Dante were so imprudent as to allow themselves to be confounded. Many of the old Ghibellins had also attached themselves to the Bianchi in the desperate hope of recovering their influence or their property. The moderate party therefore, headed by Vieri and Dante, had seceded from the Guelf Club, and had associated themselves with some of the old Ghibellin party; but at that period they probably neither did, nor intended to, depart from the broad scheme of policy which had directed their movements in the former part of their career.

Such being the state of parties in Florence, the strength being distributed equally, or nearly so, in different hands, and the government being too weak to make itself respected, or to preserve the peace of the city, the contending factions directed their attention to Rome, and addressed themselves to the individual who then occupied the Papal chair, as to a common mediator. It turned out that Corso Donati had most weight in that quarter. It was part of his scheme to summon foreign aid with the view of gaining a decided preponderance. He and his friends turned their eyes upon Charles of Valois, brother of the French King. Dante, it was known, was strongly opposed to his reception into the city. He suspected, it is probable, the intrigues of Corso or the fatal tendency of such a measure. The Poet, who had previously filled with great honour to himself the office of Prior, was absent on an embassy to Rome, when the French party having prevailed in the Florentine councils, Charles was called in, Dante banished, and his political associates subjected to the most oppressive and unjust treatment. It is to the avowed policy of the Poet towards the French Prince, that, according to a general and very credible tradition, we must refer his expatriation and consequent misfortunes; and the name of her greatest modern Poet has thus been added to the long list of exiles for which Italy has been celebrated. It includes the name of a

family, originally of little note, but which has in our own days indissolubly associated itself with the annals of Europe. The Buonaparti were exiled from Florence early in the 14th century, as Ghibellins. They removed to the district called the Lunigiana, whence they are said afterwards to have passed to Corsica.*

It was not, apparently, until long after his banishment that Dante evinced any decided disposition to advocate the cause of Ghibellinism, which asserted the paramount rights of the Empire. The "History of the Guelfs and Ghibellins," attributed to his pen, and seen by Leonardo Aretin, has either perished or sleeps in the dusty chests of some illiterate convent. But that his opinions were never of an ultra class is sufficiently proved by his early career, and by the remarkable fact that he found his last earthly refuge at the court of a Guelf Prince, Guido da Polenta. Pagano della Torre, his previous protector, was also of Guelf principles. It may be that he sought through their influence to have his sentence repealed; and we find him, a year before his death, clinging to the hope of returning to his country. Giovanni del Virgilio wished him to go to Bologna and receive the poetic crown there: his reply is as follows:—

" Nonne triumphales melius pexare capillos
Et patrio, redeam si quando, abscondere canos
Fronde sub inserta solitum flavescere, Sarno ?" †

Dante was not the only great Florentine who sought refuge from the factions and divisions of a democracy in a monarchical form of government,—such would seem to have been the sentiments of Macchiavelli, forced upon him by the course of events in his own times.‡ Dante sought to reconcile the factions, and give tranquillity to his country, which had been harassed by the dissensions of the previous hundred years.§ Finding the object unattainable without foreign aid, and that his enemies were intriguing with France, he applied first to the Pope, and finally to the Emperor Henry VII., who appears, until thwarted by the animosity of the contending parties, to have adopted a similar line of policy, that of conciliation.|| But the endeavours of the

* Gerini, *Memorie Storiche di Lunigiana*.

† Ecl. I. Dante, *Opere Minori*, tom. I. part II. p. 289. Firenze. 1835—40.

‡ See the concluding chapter of the Prince, and his familiar correspondence with Guicciardini; see also Petrarch's sentiments, *Epistola ad Carolum*, 4.

§ Dante dunque voleva unità di spada e di forza in Italia, e chi non ancora così pensa dopo cinque secoli di terribilissimo esperimento scagli contro di lui il primo sasso."—*Antologia*, Febr. 1832, page 94.

|| At the time of Henry's entry into Pisa, he found the last descendant of the famous Guelf Count, Ugolino della Gherardesca, still in captivity: he immediately set him free. On taking this step, he, however, questioned the rulers of the city,

Poet were doomed to be crossed; and in his philosophical work, "Il Convito," we find him exclaiming, "O wretched, wretched country, how irresistibly I am impelled to commiserate thy condition, whenever I read or write anything pertaining to civil government.*

Dante's great poem is indispensable to all who investigate the manners, political events, theological opinions, antiquities or philology of the middle ages. But his other works are interesting, as exhibiting, although in an inferior degree, the same extraordinary power of expressing the sternest as well as the tenderest emotions, to which his impassioned temperament disposed him. In him appears realized the imagination of a writer of our own day—

"The Poet in a golden clime was born,

Dower'd with the hate of hate, the love of love, the scorn of scorn."

The haughtiness of Dante† almost passed into a proverb. The expression attributed to him, when, at a difficult crisis of public affairs, it was proposed that he should fill an important embassy, proves at least the general notion of his character. "If I go," said he, "who remains? and if I remain, who goes?" Another trait is given by the author of the *Veltro Allegorico*, who does not, however, cite any authority. Dante was leaning against an altar in the church of Santa Maria Novella, buried in profound meditation, when he was interrupted by an idler, who would persist in annoying him with questions. At last Dante broke silence.—"Before I answer you, tell me this—Which do you consider to be the greatest beast in the world?" The other replied, that according to Pliny, this could only be the elephant. "True, O Elephant, pester me no more," said Dante, and immediately departed. Another incident to the same effect is to be found in the novels of Sacchetti. He could not disguise his own consciousness of his pre-eminent ability. One of his celebrated letters to the Emperor he commences thus:—"I, Dante Alighieri and the Florentine exiles." Such conduct must soon have destroyed his popularity with his party: he admits in one of his epistles, that he had been guilty of imprudence; and it may be doubted whether, as an exile, he was not driven into Ghibellinism, by

whether they had any opposition to make: they replied, that they had incarcerated the unfortunate Guelf, for no crime of his own, but for the offences of his ancestors. See Sclopis *Storia della Legislazione Italiana*, tom. I. p. 245, citing *Doeniges Acta Henrici VII.* p. 54.

* Tratt. IV. c. 28.

† The poet was conscious of his failing; thus he describes himself, whilst in the first circle of the Purgatory, as undergoing the punishment there inflicted upon pride, *Purg.* XI. 73—78.

having been virtually abandoned by his political friends.* When, after fruitless attempts to obtain a recall by forcible means or negotiation, he became convinced that he could only hope to effect that object by submitting to ignominious terms—then, in the indignation of his spirit, he penned the words, “Nunquam Florentiam introibo.” Then it was, to use an expression of Foscolo, that it was no longer Florence that banished Dante, but the latter who pronounced the sentence of exile against that city.† His haughty demeanour in earlier life was less excusable than at a later period, when, in the language of Johnson, the insolence and resentment of which he was accused, were not easily to be avoided by one irritated by perpetual hardships, and constrained hourly to return the spurns of contempt, and repress the insolence of prosperity.‡ And yet, in a composition of probably an earlier date, we find him continually descanting upon the praises of courtesy, and those other amiable qualities, which may reasonably be regarded as having qualified the harsher features of his character. According to him,§ the peculiar characteristic of the noble, that is, the *gentleman*, is elective habit, “abito eligente,” which ever makes choice of the mean between two extremes. How has the passage escaped the notice of the author of the Broad Stone of Honour? He proceeds—

“The soul that this celestial grace adorns,
In secret hides it not,
But soon as to its earthly mate espoused,
Displays it, until death :
Gentle, obedient, alive to shame,
In early age is seen ;
Careful the frame in beauty to improve,
And all accomplishments.—
Temperate and bold, in youthful years, and full
Of love and courtesy, and thirst of fame,
Placing in loyalty its sole delight ;
Then in old age wins praise
For prudence, justice, liberality ;
And in itself enjoys

* Conf. Parad. XVII. 61—6.

† This thought, however, is one of classical antiquity, has been attributed to Diogenes, and appropriated by Shakspeare—

“All places that the eye of heaven visits,
Are to a wise man ports and happy havens :
Teach thy necessity to reason thus ;
There is no virtue like necessity :
Think not, the King did banish thee,
But thou the King.”

Richard II. Act I. Sc. 3.

‡ See the *Veltro Allegorico*, p. 188.

§ Convito, Trattato Quarto.

Richard II. Act I. Sc. 3.

To hear and talk of others' valorous deeds.*
 Last in the fourth and closing scene of life,
 To God is re-espoused,
 Contemplating the end which is at hand,
 And thanks returning for departed years,
 Reflect now how the many are deceived."†

With respect to the minor poems of Dante, Mr. Bruce Whyte has dismissed them with the assertion that they "sentent la lampe;" but surely the easy flow of many of those canzoni, and of Mr. Whyte's own translation, might have saved the lyrical compositions of the greatest poet of the middle ages from such sweeping condemnation.

His early fame is discernible by the terms of intimacy on which he stood with the most eminent men of his day in Florence. The ordinances of justice, in excluding all families from the government which had been illustrated by knighthood,‡—a circumstance at that time treated as conclusive evidence of nobility,—virtually deprived Dante of his civic rights: with others he adopted the then approved method of evading the injustice of the law by passing over into the popular order; and with this view entered himself, as already mentioned, in one of the greater arts—that of the Physicians. His matriculation, about the year 1297, runs thus:—"Matricolato Dante d'Aldighiero degli Aldighieri Poeta Fiorentino."§ So that we find him, at that early date, with a poetical reputation already established,|| although undoubtedly it was not until later in life that he gave the earnest of the extraordinary genius which entitles him to rank with those "royal" few,—

——— "whose fame
 Like heav'n above their living head was bent."

It is an unfortunate mode of studying the works of Dante, to

* This is a generous but not a faithful translation of the line;

"D' udir e ragionar dell' altrui prode."

† Dante's Canzoniere, translation of Mr. Lyell, p. 117.

‡ Notwithstanding this explanation of the term "Grandi," which Dino Compagni, a contemporary historian, has furnished, (*Cronica delle Cose occorrenti ne' Tempi suoi*.) Mr. Hallam has, in his work on the Middle Ages, (vol. I. p. 309, note,) mistaken the consequence for the cause, and supposed that they were called "Grandi" because their names were inscribed on the ordinances of justice; it is true this may have become the secondary meaning of the term. Niebuhr has noticed the analogy of this voluntary resignation of nobility to the *Transitio ad plebem* of the Romans.

§ Pelli, p. 90.

|| We find him, indeed, in the very first canto of the "Inferno," which is generally understood to have been written before his exile, using the past tense in speaking of his fame. He professes his obligation to Virgil for "Lo bello stile che m'ha fatto onore."—*Infern.* l.

1. another proof in the
 by

view them through the medium of the partial theories of interpretation adopted by particular commentators, seldom disposed to admit any facts at variance with the views which they support. Dante was often wrong in his estimate of things and of persons. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? How could a work, uninspired, be free from inconsistencies and contradictions, when it was written in separate parts, through an interval of sixteen years, and professed to decide *ex cathedrâ* upon the past, the present, and the future, to judge the character of contemporary events and of contemporary men? The wonder is not that the inconsistencies are so many, but so few. Inconsistencies there are, no doubt, of a glaring nature in the life of Dante—inconsistencies in matters of religion and of politics, as well as inconsistency in matters of the affections. We find him at one time applying to the Roman Pontiff the mystical language used in the Apocalypse with reference to Antichrist;* at another admitting him to be Christ's vicar;† sometimes he addresses his native city in terms of the most violent invective; at others she is the "Famosissima figlia di Roma," "worthy of triumphal fame," "mother of heroes." That he was of changeable temperament, we have his own authority for affirming;‡ that in matters of the affections he was equally inconstant, rests not merely upon the assertion of Boccaccio, but, it would seem, his own plain confession.§ The attempt to reconcile the apparent contradictions, has occasionally involved the sense of the Poet in almost inextricable confusion. Some writers have seen the clue to the supposed labyrinth in the employment of an occult language, a sectarian phraseology; so that the man who sought to reconcile not merely the factions but the dialects of his country,—who aimed at unity in all practicable things, a unity "di forza e di spada,"—who, it would appear, was, for the most part, disposed to admit the spiritual authority of the church, and who followed the civilians of his age, in regarding an universal monarchy as expedient and desirable,—has been degraded into a mere member of a sect, so insignificant and unimportant that the historian has scorned to record its progress.

We are requested to believe that the Poet impugned the principal dogmas of the Church of Rome; that he did this under cover of a conventional language known only to a party.||

* *Infern.* XIX. 106.

† *Purgat.* XX. 87.

‡

"E se la stella si cambiò e rise,

Qual mi fec' io, che pur di mia natura

Trasmutabile son per tutte guise!"—*Parad.* V. 97—99.

§ *Purgat.* XXXI. 59.

|| Dante's profession of faith is inserted in recent editions of his works. Rossetti recognizes an argument in his favour, even in the three pomegranates, which

or 20?

But it may be remarked, that a Guelf or a Ghibellin, of Dante's age, was no longer, if he had ever been, a mere religious partisan.*

The substantial differences between the Church and the Empire were at an end on the extinction of the Suabian dynasty; the dispute about investitures, which is said to have occasioned seventy-eight battles, was adjusted; and the names Guelf and Ghibellin had become scarcely more than mere designations of political factions, ill understood by those who bore them, and often assumed to veil or further the purposes of family animosity or Papal ambition.† The religious sentiments of the Poet probably never experienced any material change. "You have," says he, in the "Paradise," "the Old and the New Testament, and the pastor of the church who guides you;"‡ nor does the language which he uses in the political "Treatise de Monarchiâ" differ. After demonstrating that the right of the Emperor does not depend upon any earthly vicar, but flows immediately from God himself, he thus concludes:—"But this truth must not be taken in so rigid a sense as to countenance the opinion that the Emperor is in no respect subject to the Roman Pontiff; for this mortal is, in a certain mode, ordained for immortal felicity. Let then Cæsar accord to Peter the reverence due to a father from his first-born; so that, illuminated by the light of the paternal favour, he may be able, with greater effect, to irradiate the world entrusted to his government by Him who alone rules spiritual and temporal matters."§

the fresco of Giotto places in the hand of the Poet. (See the Beatrice di Dante, ad finem.) The conclusions of this writer have been impugned by Arthur Hallam, in whom, since deceased, Rossetti recognizes his most able opponent, (see remarks on Professor Rossetti's Dialogues,) by Monti, (see his Preface to the "Convito,") by A. W. Schlegel, (*Révue des deux Mondes*, 15 Août, 1836,) by Ozanam, (*Dante et la Philosophie Catholique*), by the Jesuit Pianciani, (*Tipografia delle belle Arti*), and by Artaud, (*Hist. de Dante*). On the other hand, we learn, from a statement in the "Mistero del Amor Platonico," that the system of its author has constituted the thesis of a series of lectures at Berlin; and that Vecchioni, a Neapolitan Judge, embraced, not many years ago, opinions not very dissimilar, which he promised to support in a future publication,—a promise which he has not kept.

* Ozanam (p. 276, in note,) cites the words of Gregory X., addressed to the Florentines, A.D. 1273, to prove the indefinite signification then attached to the word Ghibellin:—"Ghibellinus est, at Christianus at Civis at proximus. Ergo hæc tot et tam valida conjunctionis nomina, Ghibellino succumbent? et id unum atque inane nomen (quod quid significet nemo intelligit) plus valebit ad odium quam ista omnia tam clara et tam solida expressa ad charitatem, sed quoniam hæc vestra partium studia pro Romanis pontificibus contra eorum inimicos suscepisse asseveratis: ego Romanus pontifex hos vestros cives, etai hactenus offenderint, redeuntes tamen ad gremium recepi ac remissis injuriis pro filiis habeo."

† Parad. VI. 31—33.

‡ Ibid. V. 76, 77.

§ De Monarchiâ, lib. III. s. 14.

That he was profoundly impressed with the necessity of order, clearly appears from a passage in the "Convito," where he considers the advantage arising from the sway of a single monarch. He says, "that for the perfection of the universal religion of the human species, it is convenient for there to be one pilot, who, considering the various conditions of mankind, and introducing corresponding institutions, shall be in every respect invested with an universal and undeniable office of command."* We find him upon one occasion avowing his veneration for the supreme office in the Roman Hierarchy, by kneeling to Adrian V.†

In the "Convito" Dante affirms that the Holy Church cannot err.‡ According to Leonardo Bruni, he wrote a Latin letter to the Italian Cardinals, urging them, after the death of Clement, to concur in electing an Italian Pope.§ In a letter, of which the original Latin has been recently discovered, and which is addressed to the people and princes of Italy, we find him thus exhorting them to receive the Emperor:—"The Lord of heaven and earth has constituted him your king. It is he whom Peter, the vicar of God, admonishes us to honour, and whom Clement, the now successor of Peter, illuminates with the light of his apostolic benediction." If we can credit Filelfo, Dante wrote upon one occasion a letter to Boniface VIII., commencing thus, "Beatitudinis tuæ sanctitas nihil potest cogitare pollutum, quæ vices in terris gerens Christi, totius est misericordiæ sedes, veræ pietatis exemplum, summæ religionis apex."

Although, like most of the writers of that age, ever ready to attack the glaring abuses of the Court of Rome, Dante was educated, lived, and died a disciple of St. Thomas Aquinas. During the anguish occasioned by the death of Beatrice, many of his biographers—the early commentator Francesco Buti amongst the number—suppose that he entered a Franciscan convent; and it is an undoubted fact that he desired to be buried at Ravenna, in the habit of that order.||

With respect to the "gergo," or conventional language supposed to have been in use at that period by an anti-papal party, and by Dante, as one of its chiefs, for the secret propagation of principles hostile to those avowed by the Church of Rome, and akin to the Lutheran doctrines of a subsequent age, we regard them as militating against every canon of criticism. Can it be supposed for an instant, that Dante would seek to veil his opinions

* Tratt. IV. c. IV.

† Purg. XIX. 128. Confer. Infern. c. II. 23-4, 30; XIX. 101. Purg. III. 34-5; XX. 85, 90.

‡ Tratt. II. c. IV.

§ Vita di Dante.

|| Hist. de Dante, par M. Artaud, p. 84.

upon doctrines of the highest importance, from any dread of personal consequences? The age in which he lived was fearless and licentious to excess, free of speech, and courageous in enduring persecution. Dante had loaded the whole Guelf party with the foulest invectives; he had denounced the Court of Rome in no measured terms; he had congratulated the chief Guelf city, Florence,* upon her notoriety in Hell;† he had assailed a living Pope, Boniface VIII., with the bitterest satire ever perused. What motive could he have to involve in mysterious language any truths which had become evident to his ardent intelligence, and which it imported the world to know? A conventional language implies a party who are to use it; but Dante glories in having stood aloof from party,—in having formed a party for himself.‡ The modern doctrine of the "gergo," seems to be the fond imagination of learning and ingenuity ill bestowed. The untenable position has, however, found supporters in this country, amongst men whose cause is not so weak as to need the aid of a falsehood, and who ought to be aware that the time has gone by when a question of doctrine can be seriously affected by an appeal to any other name than that of the Divine founder of their religion.

M. Rossetti appeals to the admitted obscurity and mysterious language observable in the writers of the langue d'oïl and d'oc as evidence of the "gergo." Those characters, however, like the imitations of Latin versification, the anagrams, the acrostics, the euphuism of later days, constituted merely the follies of the age. Even the sermons of St. Bernard, where we would least look for it, abound in mysticism. The critic is at a loss to account for the contemporary popularity of the "Roman de la Rou," except by referring it to the hidden heresy concealed in its pages; but as Mr. Bruce Whyte well remarks,§ it was precisely the kind of composition most in accordance with the prevailing taste. Every body in those days was an alchemist, either in the literal or figurative sense of the term. The whole universe was regarded as one allegory; it was thought that both the material and spiritual worlds possessed marvellous secrets, which it was the proper province of each science to penetrate. If we regard the intrinsic merits of the "Roman de la Rou," as insufficient to account for its popu-

* A fox of corruption concealing itself from the huntsman—a viper shooting its sting into the entrails of its mother—a goat whose loathsomeness infects the flock—a Myrrha wickedly and impiously burning in the incestuous embraces of her parent Cinyras—an Amata hanging herself through disappointment. Such are the invectives with which the *splendida bilis* of the exile assails his native city. They all occur in a single letter—that addressed to Henry VII.

† Infern. XVI.

‡ Parad. XVII.

§ Hist. des Langues Romanes, tom. III. p. 91-2.

larity, sufficient causes existed in its gross licentiousness, and the persecution which it had to encounter on the part of the Church. We think M. Rossetti admits that he has not seen any of the judgments of the Cours d'Amour; he may be safely challenged to reconcile the famous judgments of the Countess of Champagne, and of Ermengarde, Viscountess of Norbonne,* with his hypothesis. But not only was his in some respects a trifling age, but even Dante shows that he himself can also sometimes trifle, not to mention the passages in his great poem familiar to its readers—witness his adoption of that most absurd of all metres, the Sestine; witness also the Canzone, whose authenticity has, it is true, but in our opinion without due reason, been doubted, commencing “Ahi faulx ris,” &c. &c., written alternately in three languages, the langue d’oil, Latin and Italian, the first rhyming with the first, the second with the second, the third with the third. The Canzone concludes thus:—

“Canson, vos pognes ir per tot le mond
 Namque locutus sum in lingua trina
 Ut gravis mea spina
 Si saccia per lo mondo, ogn’ uomo il senta :
 Forse pietà n’avrà chi mi tormenta.”

It is impossible to contrast the later with the earlier writings of the author of the “Spirito Antipapale,” without entertaining a suspicion that he has himself an esoteric as well as an exoteric creed. At all events, few can doubt the tendency of such a work as the “Mistero del Amor Platonico,” which appears to have borrowed somewhat from the specious theories contained, with great parade of learning, in the “Origine de tous les Cultes” of Dupuis. We thought that Gibbon had, to borrow an expression of Mr. Boaden, “replaced the veil upon the Eleusinian mysteries,” that his criticism, which obtained the sanction of Heyne, and we believe of scholars generally, had annihilated the daring theory of Warburton; but Rossetti has, upon the sole authority of the latter, without the addition of a single new argument, reproduced the interpretation given by the Bishop in his “Divine Legation.” He does not attempt to deny that there are numerous passages in the writings of Dante literally incompatible with his theory; on the contrary, he attempts to explain them by the necessity the Poet was under, of using white as well as black words (*parole bianche e neve*), of speaking occasionally in exoteric phraseology. This construction would make Dante not merely a dissimulator, but a simulator; not only a hypocrite, but a positive dealer in falsehoods. Of how mean a character must Dante henceforth be

* Consult Raynouard, *Choix*, &c., tom. II. p. 120.

regarded!—Dante, hitherto cited as the bold, the uncompromising friend of truth. How does the whole theory deaden our admiration of those noble lines—

“ S’ io ãl vero son timido amico
Temo di perder vita tra coloro
Che questo tempo chiameranno antico ! ”

How incompatible is it with the continued exhortation addressed to the Poet in the “ Divine Comedy,” urging him boldly to speak the truth of what he had seen in the other world ! If there were a secret heresy couched in his verses which the author wished to conceal, with what view call public attention to the fact by continually challenging, as he does, his readers to penetrate their mystic meaning ? Even M. Rossetti’s interpretation supplies no more hardy assertions than the literal text. We are by no means disposed to restrict the sense of Dante ; on the contrary, knowing his profound character as a writer, and the vast extent of his acquirements—having his own avowal before us, that he wrote with reference to a literal, an allegorical, a moral, and an anagogic meaning, (an expression, by the way, which is said to have been borrowed from St. Buonaventure,)—we would construe his poems “ polisensamente ” in the widest view of the term ; but who can admit willingly the doctrine of the “ gergo ? ” Take the writings of any poet of exalted imaginative powers,—Shelley for instance, who abounds in figurative expressions,—and it would not be a matter of much difficulty to subject his poems to the process which has been applied to the Italian writers, who are supposed to write in the so-called “ gergo ; ” or take that great master of allegory, William Spenser, who, after apologising for presenting the “ idle rhymes,” as he terms them, of the “ Faery Queene ” to the Lord Treasurer Burleigh, thus concludes :—

“ Yet if their deeper sense be inly waid,
And the dim veile, with which from common view
Their fairer parts are hid, aside be laid,
Perhaps not vain they may appear to you.”

Are we to consider this as the admission of a mystical and conventional language ? We think we hear the outcry of the English critics at such a supposition.

With respect to recent researches, it should be noticed, that the bibliographer, Stephen Audin, has discovered the letter of the Frate Hilario, whose authenticity has been matter of discussion in the literary world, transcribed by Boccaccio himself, and forming part of a miscellaneous volume (Zibaldone) in the Laurentian library. All questions also respecting the authenticity of the

treatise "*De Vulgari Eloquentia*," and the good faith of Trissino, may be considered at an end since the recovery at Grenoble of the original Latin MS. of the 14th century, which whether in Dante's own writing has not been ascertained. It was announced, we believe, for the first time, by Fraticelli.*

In 1827, Professor Witte, of Breslau, published a small volume with the following title:—"Dantis Aligherii Epistolæ quæ extant." It contained all the letters, or fragments of letters, seven in number, which the Editor thought could be relied on as his, together with Witte's own notes and emendations. They were as follows:—

1. A letter to Can Grande respecting the "*Paradise*." Date, 1317.
2. One to a friend, a churchman apparently at Florence, rejecting humiliating conditions suggested with a view to a recall from banishment. Date, Dec. 1316.
3. A letter to the Italian Princes, urging them to give Henry VII. a favourable reception. 1310.
4. One to Henry VII. inciting him to leave Lombardy and march upon Tuscany, the hotbed of Guelfism. April, 1311.
5. A missive to the Italian Cardinals, exhorting them to restore the Apostolic See to Rome. Apr. 1314.
6. An original letter to Cino da Pistoja, answering a question of gallantry proposed by the latter.
7. A letter to Guido da Polenta, written from Venice, where it would seem that Dante had been sent ambassador. He affirms the inability of the senators to understand either the Latin or the Italian dialects; and accounts for their ignorance of the latter by their Greek or Dalmatian descent. This letter has been doubted by Witte and others. Date, circ. 1313.

This publication of Witte arrested public attention. It was familiar to all scholars, from the testimony of Boccaccio, Bruni, and Filelfo, that Dante had written numerous letters in the Latin language; even the commencements of some had been preserved. Researches were made; and a few years since the same learned Professor announced in a German Review the discovery of seven more letters, three of which he pronounced positively to be Dante's, whilst he thought himself justified in inferring the others to have been dictated by him, although bearing different signatures. These letters Witte was allowed to transcribe; but during his absence they were one day purloined from his table, and he was not allowed a second copy: From his account it would seem, that amongst the MSS. found on the

* *Opere Minori*, tom. III. part. II. p. 16. Fir. 1835—1840.

taking of Heidelberg some centuries ago, and presented by Maximilian of Bavaria to Gregory XV. in 1622, was a parchment volume in 4to. numbered 1729, purporting to have been written in Perugia, in the summer of 1394, by Francesco da Monte Pulciano. It contained the ten eclogues of Petrarch, the well-known treatise by Dante "*De Monarchiâ*," and nine letters in Latin. Of these eight have never been printed; the ninth had been previously published by Witte,—it was the letter addressed by Dante to the Emperor Henry. Another of these epistles was the original Latin text of the one addressed to the Princes of Italy, which had been previously only known to scholars in an Italian translation. The remaining seven were hitherto wholly unknown; but in this ancient volume it is positively affirmed that three of them are the composition of Dante; and Professor Witte infers, from the classification and tenor of the remaining four (which, however, bear other signatures), that they proceeded from the same pen.

1. The letter first in date, but eighth in order as classified in the MS., is not absolutely attributed to Dante. It is directed to the Cardinal Niccolò d'Ostia (Albertini di Prato), and purports to proceed from Alessandro da Romena and the twelve leaders of the exiles, of whom Dante was one. It would seem that the Cardinal had been sent to Florence in March, 1304, in order to negotiate a general amnesty between the contending factions; that he had promised the exiles to restore them to their country, and even to remodel the state according to their wishes. The letter of the exiles avows their inability to express their gratitude in adequate terms; they protest their determination only so far to profit by the humiliation of their adversaries as may be necessary for the advantage and salvation of their common country (*adversarios nostros ad sulcos bonæ civilitatis remeare*).

2. The second is a letter of condolence addressed by Dante to Oberto and Guido di Romena, upon the occasion of the death of their uncle, the before-mentioned Count Alessandro. The date must be between 1308 and 1311. Dante speaks of Alessandro in terms of the highest encomium, as also his family, which he terms the most powerful house in Tuscany. His good opinion Dante lived to alter.* He proceeds to apologize for not attending to pay the last respect to the remains of Alessandro,—urging as his excuse, the unexpected poverty† in which his exile had placed him, and which even deprived him of horses and of arms.

* Inf. XXX. 77.

† Dante continually recurs to the subject of his destitution. In his letter to Can Grande, he thus expresses himself:—"Urget enim me rei familiaris angustia ut hæc et alia utilia reipublicæ derelinquere oporteat." According to Giovanni

3. The third letter is a short familiar one, addressed to the Marquis Moroello Malispina, whom Dante addresses as his protector; it must have been written about the same date, and confirms in several particulars the account of the early biographers. The Poet alludes in it to his having been an object of wonder to the court of Malispina, by the resolute firmness with which he resisted, whilst there, the fascinations of the sex; and confesses, that scarcely had he arrived at the sources of the Arno, when he met with a lady to whose influence he had been compelled to submit, who had driven from his mind every other thought, and had rendered him quite a different being. A poem appears to have accompanied this letter, which Witte conjectures to be the one commencing—"Amor dacchè convien pur ch'io mi dolga."

4. The fourth letter, dated 31st of March, 1311, purports to be written from the confines of Tuscany, at the source of the Arno, at a period when the Emperor Henry VII.—destined so sadly to disappoint the hopes of Dante—was marching upon Cremona and Brescia. It is written in the fiercest tone of Ghibellinism, and has the following superscription:—"Dante Alighieri, the Florentine, undeservedly banished, salutes the impious and rebellious Florentines." How different the commencement of his previous expostulatory letter!—"Popule mi, quid feci tibi?" One passage shows how far from his thoughts was any attack upon the unity of the Church of Rome. "As you have," says he ironically, "shown in other respects your hostile disposition to the apostolic unity, make trial of your ability to disturb this unity also (that of civil government); so that the existence of a double Moon (Emperor) may lead to what seems a probable consequence—a double Sun" (Pope). Dante proceeds to picture to them the consequences which he considers that their resistance, a necessarily unsuccessful one, will entail, *i. e.* ruin and destruction.

5, 6, 7. The remaining letters, although comparatively unimportant, are not without interest; they bear the signature of the Countess (G. Guidi) di Battifolle, and are addressed to the Empress Margaret of Brabant, wife of Henry VII. They purport all to be written about the time when that Emperor invaded Italy, and contain allusions to passing political events. The third, which is dated from Poppi, in the Upper Valley of the Arno, 18th March, 1311, answers some inquiries made by the Empress,

di Serravalle, he had passed through all the forms necessary to the Doctorial degree, which he would have taken, "but his penury forbad." See ed. De Romanis, Rome, 1815—17, tom. IV. p. 6, in note. The Doctorate would, we believe, have entitled Dante to rank with knights; both were in those days distinctions coveted by princes and nobles, at least in the South of Europe. Both were styled *Messiri* or *Domini*.

respecting the health of the Countess and her family. Witte* recognizes in this Countess Guidi, the mother of Frederigo Novello, mentioned in the "Purgatorio."

M. Artaud has ascertained from M. Frederici, of Padua, the error of Foscolo, who affirmed that there existed an autograph of Dante in that city. It appears that the family of Papafava possess a *copy* of an instrument, date 1306, 27 August, in which "Dantino q. Alligery de Florentia et nunc stat. Padue," is one of the witnesses to a loan of 1705 books, contracted between parties therein mentioned. This copy is of the date 1335, and is authenticated by a notary. It is well proved that Dante, at the date of the instrument, was at Padua.

M. Frederici has published, from an unedited work of the Padre Paolo Attaccanti, who it appears had written a commentary upon Dante, a new reading of the 59th verse of the Fifth Canto of the "Inferno," where, with reference to Semiramis, the printed editions have

"Che succedette a Nino e fù sua sposa."

Instead of "succedette," the new version gives "sugger dette," and the sense would then be, who suckled Ninus and became his wife; an opposition of idea familiar to Dante's style, which makes the reader shudder to contemplate; "quasi dicat," adds Attaccanti, *illa est Semiramis luxuriosissima, quæ habuit in virum Ninum quem lactaverat, et, ne homines obloquerentur de eâ, fecit legem ut omnibus liceret uxorari ad libitum.* Writers may call the son Ninus as well as Ninias, but the proposed new reading is opposed to the authority of the MSS.; and unfortunately for Attaccanti's correction, we have the original Latin Hexameters of the Fifth Canto of the "Inferno;" they run thus,—

"Hæc uxor Nini regis fuit Assyriorum,
Et sibi successit regno Semiramis illa."†

A very general tradition has affirmed that the famous Count Ugolino, when incarcerated, fed upon the flesh of his own children, and a corresponding sense has been attached to the line,—

"Più che il dolor potè il digiuno."

A few years ago a discussion took place at an entertainment given by the celebrated literato Niccolini, as to the correctness of the interpretation. This led to a controversy between Professors Carmignani and Rosini, whose merits have divided the literary world. See the facts stated by M. Artaud, in his "Histoire de Dante."‡

* Opere Minori di Dante, Fir. 1835—40, tom. III. part II. p. 165—199.

† Divina Commedia giusta la Legione del Codice Bartoliniana, tom. I. p. 317, ed. Udine, 1823; where see a description of 66 MSS. of the Comedy in the libraries of Northern Italy.

‡ P. 255.

The visit of Dante to England was supposed by Tiraboschi to stand merely upon the dictum of Giovanni di Serravalle, an early writer of the fourteenth century, who affirms that the Poet had studied "Paduæ, Bononiæ, demum Oxoniis, et Parisiis;" but the fact rests, it appears, upon still earlier and more venerable authority,—that of Boccaccio. See his Latin letter to Petrarch, which accompanied a copy of the Comedy transcribed by Boccaccio himself: he imagines Dante led by Apollo—

" per celsa nivosi
Cyrreos, mediosque sinus, tacitosque recessus
Naturæ, cœlique vias, terræque, marisque,
Aonios fontes, Parnassi culmen, et antra
Julia, Parisios dudum extremosque Britannos."*

The enigma of the wood at the beginning of the "Inferno," so fruitful a source of controversy, has been treated by Fraticelli, in a dissertation which appears in the complete edition of Dante recently published at Florence, so as to reconcile many of the views of previous writers.

PRINCIPAL ALLEGORY OF THE DIVINE COMEDY.

Symbolical Figures of the First Canto, according to Fraticelli.

The wood with a deep valley.		The mount with a delightful garden.		
Disorder, political and moral. Discord—war—anarchy. Immorality—misery—slavery.		Order, political and moral. Concord—peace—monarchy. Morality—wealth—liberty.		
Babylon.	BARBARISM.			
	Infidelity, public and private.			
	The wood bitter (amara).			
	The wood savage (selvaggia).			
	The wood deserted (deserta).			
	i. e.			
	(Disorder produces nothing but evil).			
	The wood is deprived of every ray of light—(è priva d'ogni luce).			
	i. e.			
	Barbarism has no appreciation of what is right or just.			
Guelfism.	Lanza, or Panther.			
	Guelf Florence— <i>envious</i> .			
	Lion.			
	The power of France, <i>proud</i> .			
	Wolf.			
The secular Papal power, <i>avaricious</i> .		Jerusalem.	CIVILIZATION.	
			Felicity, public and private.	
			The mount.	
			Cultivated garden.	
			The mount is cause of every joy, (cagione di tutta gioja).	
			i. e.	
		Order produces every good.		
		The hill is irradiated by the Sun.		
		i. e.		
		Civilization is illuminated by the light of Rectitude and Justice.		
		Veltro, or Hound.		
		The military power of the Ghibellins, or, the hero nourished by love, wisdom, and virtue, who after destroying the Guelf ascendancy, shall effect the reordination and felicity of Italy.		
		Ghibellinism.		
Dante, Human Reason.				
Virgil, Human Science.				
Beatrice, Divine Science.				

The "gajetta pelle," to which Dante alludes in the First Canto

* Dante, Opere, Fir. tom. V. p. 133, 1830—1841.

of the "Inferno," as inspiring him with hope, the celebrated linguist, now the Cardinal Mezzofanti, has, I believe, referred not to the "Lonza," or Panther, which had opposed his further progress, but to the Ram, the constellation visible in Spring.

The four stars seen by the Poet in the First Canto of the "Purgatorio" have, notwithstanding the contrary interpretation of Streckfuss, been understood by Humboldt and others to have a real meaning, and to denote "la croix du Sud," or constellation visible at the South Pole. "The philosophical and religious mysticism," says Humboldt, "which pervades and vivifies the immense composition of Dante, assigns to all objects not only an ideal but a real and material existence, which constitute with him two different worlds as it were, reciprocally reflecting each other." The four stars were similarly understood by the celebrated navigator Amerigo Vespucci. It is observable that Dante, in his different works, has cited not merely Ptolemy and Aristotle, the principal authorities on astronomy in his age, but Arabian writers also, from whom he may have learnt the existence of the cross of the South. The roundness of the earth and Antipodes were, as we learn from M. Libri,* facts also generally admitted at the commencement of the 14th century.

Missirini, the friend of Canova, has directed his attention to the restoration of monuments illustrative of Dante; and with some appearance of probability, claims for an ancient picture of the 14th century, now in his possession, the lineaments of Beatrice, nay, even the design of Dante himself.

A portrait of Dante by Giotto, whose existence had been indicated by Vasari, was discovered on the 21st of July, 1840, in the ancient chapel of the Palazzo del Potestà at Florence. The Poet is placed near Pope Clement IV., Brunetto Latini, and Corso Donati. The painter Giotto was following his profession at Rome in 1298, according to an authentic account for which we are indebted to Baldinucci, previously to which he had painted the pictures in the Church del Carmine, and in the Palazzo del Potestà; and as Brunetto Latini died in 1294, it is probable that the work was executed previously,—it may be about the date when Dante became connected, by marriage, with the family of Donati. It is certain that the portrait must have been painted before 1300, since in that year the Poet left Florence, never to return. The countenance is that of a young man. These portraits were soon after plastered over by the enemies of the Poet. Various attempts were made from time to time to restore them, it being well known that they existed. They were at last re-

* *Histoire des Sciences Mathématiques*, tom. II. p. 197, note I.

covered, mainly, we believe, through the perseverance and enthusiasm of Signor Bezzi. Another very interesting likeness of Dante is in the possession of the Marchese Torrigiani; it is a cast generally believed to have been taken shortly after death.

The minor poems, the foundation of the fame of Dante, have at length received the attention which they so much needed. It is a long, and a difficult, and in some instances impossible, task to assign the date of those productions, or even to fix with any degree of certainty what was composed prior to 1297, in which year appears the earliest record of his poetical reputation, when he was matriculated in the Art or Company of Physicians, as "Dante Aldighiero degl' Aldighieri, Poeta Fiorentino." He was then 32 years of age. From Fraticelli,* a writer who has followed up the design, indicated and left incomplete by Trivulzio and Monti, it appears that Mr. Lyell has too hastily received many canzoni and sonnets as genuine, which rest upon little or no proof. Witte has also occupied himself with the same subject, and has published several unedited sonnets from MSS. in libraries at Venice and Milan; 145 lyrical pieces (Canzoni, Sestine, Ballate, Sonnets, Madrigals, or Fragments) have been already published as the compositions of Dante Alighieri,—of which number, according to Fraticelli, only 78 can be positively affirmed to be his. The same meritorious writer has carefully classified the genuine, doubtful, and spurious poems.†

If we add the discovery of an ancient commentary upon the "Inferno," by Guiniforte delli Bargiggi, at Marseilles, where it published, A.D. 1838, with an extraordinary dedication to the present Pope, by a French advocate, certainly not in communion with the church of Rome, we believe that we have enumerated the principal recent publications illustrative of the life and writings of Dante. We think that enough has been said to render the fact intelligible, why the interest excited by the subject upon the Continent has not been less intense than that occasioned by the recovery of the treatise "de Republicâ" of the Roman Orator.

* Opere Minori, tom. I. c. 3. Fir. 1835—1840.

† P. 341.

*Canzone attributed to Dante, published by Permission of the
Trustees of the British Museum.*

A MS. volume (3459) in the Harleian Collection at the British Museum contains a Canzone (consisting of eighty verses of eleven or seven syllables each intermixed), therein, and in the printed Catalogue ascribed to Dante Alighieri. The volume, which is in folio, and on paper, comprises, in addition to the whole of the Divine Comedy, a commentary subjoined to each canto, the well-known metrical Prologue of Dante's son Jacopo, and arguments to the "Inferno" and "Purgatorio" in verse, and to the "Paradiso" in prose.—The whole is not very clearly written. It certainly escaped the attention of Foscolo, who, as appears from the list of Dante MSS. appended to the recent edition of his Commentary, had examined personally only two, the Mazzuchellian and the Roscoe.

Although the Harleian MS. above alluded to is referred in the Catalogue to the fifteenth century, the party who compiled it probably merely drew the inference from the date 1487 appearing on the fly leaf, at the end of the following memorandum, which is here copied verbatim from the original.

"Questo libro de pehamore de dio alluogo (here twelve words have been erased, the last two seem to be di Firenze) Bartolomeo de Giovanni torniaio el quale disse volea fusse per elemosina e per l' aia de dicto Giovanni suo padre e vole sia messo. s. uo. posto (about five more words are here also erased, the last seems to be detti) frati accio preghino dio per lui e per l' anima de dicto suo padre e dell altri suo pxri. E questo de a di 9 de Marzo 1487."

It would seem, then, that at the last mentioned date, the book had been given, for the good of the souls of the donor and his relatives, to some monastic institution in Florence. Now it is remarkable, that the ink in which the body of the volume is written is much fainter than that of the donation itself: the book is wormed, and not very legible. Upon referring to parties connected with the Museum, and conversant with the character of the old MSS., it was stated to the writer that the volume ought to be regarded as of the fourteenth, or at all events as not later than the beginning of the fifteenth, century; in other words, they referred it to some period within an hundred years of the death of Dante.

The book, as has been stated, contains a poem, entitled "Chanzone di Dante," commencing "Ghuai a chi nel tormento," and written, not, it is believed, in all respects in a very common metre.* It is far

* Quadrio, in his History of Poesy, furnishes no such precise form of the Canzone, although he carefully considers the four species—the Petrarchesque, Pindaric, the Canzoni a ballo, and the Anacreontic.

from being without poetical merit; conceived in a tone of rough energy, it contains almost in every line some allusion to public abuses, or to the bad usage which the writer had encountered. Far from possessing the elegance which characterizes the productions of Petrarch or Boccaccio—more nervous, yet less graceful than those of Cino da Pistoja—too artificial and too good for Antonio Pucci,—who could it be, that at that early period of Italian Literature contrived to convey in such forcible language his view of the disastrous state of public society, and to insinuate in such indignant terms the story of his private misfortunes? It is impossible to read and not regard it as the genuine effusion of one trusting and betrayed—a man of ardent feelings smarting acutely under the keen sense of wrong. It has all the earnestness of truth. The writer feels it hard to endure the injury, where he was entitled to look for far different recompense—"service and honour." He has suffered anguish, "tormento;" he has been compelled to bow to his bitterest foe; imperative reasons forbid him to detail his grounds of complaint, or to denounce its cause. He has confided his fortunes to others, and the trust has been betrayed. He has undergone a severe reverse of fortune, "from high to low:" he has constituted himself the servant of others, in the hope of obtaining "fruit," and finds in the end that he has made no advancement whatever towards his object. He has endeavoured to conciliate men of various moods and tempers, and he has been unsuccessful in the attempt. He has suffered rather for the faults of others, than his own. He has been treated unjustly by some ordinance, "legge." He is at once energetic, satirical, egotistic, unfortunate, vindictive, and religious. What Poet of that early epoch satisfies these various conditions? Let the poetry speak for itself. In the notes are given the various readings of Allacci and Ubaldini; in the text, the phraseology of the Harleian MS. is for the most part retained, corrected occasionally by the other copies. We have, however, omitted throughout the letter *h*, which Florentine transcribers of the early centuries thrust in indiscriminately after every *c* and *g* that had a hard sound; a practice which the lower classes of their countrymen retain in their pronunciation to the present day, to the no small disparagement of their beautiful dialect.

Guai¹ a chi nel tormento
 Sua² non può spander voce,
 E quando fuoco 'l cuoce,³
 Gli⁴ convien d' allegrezza⁵ far sembianti.
 Guai a chi nel suo lamento
 Dir non può chi gli nuoce:⁶
 E qual gli è più feroce⁷
 Costretto è d' aggradir⁸ se gli e⁹ davanti.¹⁰
 Guai a chi 'l ben di se in altrui comette:¹¹
 Chi non¹² certo di se vive languendo;

¹ Allacci.—Guay throughout.

² Harl. MS.—Suo.

³ All.—seco il coze. Harl. MS.—il fuoco cuoce.

⁴ All.—li.

⁵ Harl. MS.—de lo grazzir.

⁶ All.—che li noze.

⁷ All.—feroze.

⁸ Harl. MS.—digradar. All.—di gradir.

⁹ Harl. MS.—soglia.

¹⁰ All.—denanti.

¹¹ Ubald.—somette.

¹² Ubald.—Che l' uom.

Ezzo vento¹³ temendo,
 D' alto in bassezza¹⁴ rimuta poi¹⁵ stato.
 Guai a chi servire altrui¹⁶ si mette,
 Chi cominci¹⁷ amistà frutto chiedendo,¹⁸
 Perchè l' util fallendo¹⁹
 Dimostra 'l fin il cominciar²⁰ vietato.²¹
 Grave è, poter in pace²²
 Ingiuria²³ sofferrir,²⁴
 Da chi dovria venire
 Per merito servir ed onorare.
 Grave all' uomo²⁵ verace,
 Repression del fallire²⁶
 D' altrui forse partire;
 La virtù coli vizij dimorare.²⁷
 Grave, star innocente tra²⁸ corrotti,²⁹
 Fa lunga usanza debil il costante,
 Non arà³⁰ virtù tante,
 Che non inciampi se non gl' abbandoni.³¹
 Grave all' uom poter piacer a tutti,
 Perchè a ciascun piace dissomigliante
 E presso è scordante,
 Ma soprattutto all' usanza de' buoni.³²
 Folle, chi si diletta,
 Ed a diservir³³ prende;
 Uom,³⁴ chi non si difende,
 Perche fortuna toglia³⁵ e da potere,
 Folle è, chi non aspetta
 Prezzo,³⁶ di quel che vende;
 Così,³⁷ chi l' altro offende,
 Aspetta dallui³⁸ guidardone avere.
 Folle, chi è si compreso³⁹ d' arroganza,⁴⁰
 O chi di se presume valor tanto,⁴¹
 Che fà del piacer⁴² canto,
 Perchè uom ch' inciampa talor non dicade.⁴³

¹³ All. and Ubald.—E sovente.¹⁴ All.—bassezza.¹⁵ All. and Ubald.—ritorna suo.¹⁶ All.—alcun.¹⁷ All.—comenzi.¹⁸ All. and Ubald.—cherendo.¹⁹ All.—L' utel falendo.²⁰ All.—el comenzar.²¹ Ubald.—viziato.²² All.—en paze.²³ All.—Enzuria.²⁴ Harl. MS.—sostenere.²⁵ Ubald.—buon.²⁶ All. and Ubald.—se 'l fallire.²⁷ All.—d' altrui fa in se perire

La virtù e con vicij a dimorare.

Ubaldini reads the same, only "Le virtudi," instead of "La virtù."

²⁸ All.—entra. Ubald.—intra.²⁹ All.—corrotti.³⁰ All.—auray. Ubald.—avrai.³¹ All. and Ubald.—Che sol non sie se tu lor abbandoni.³² All.—Perche à ciascun suo plaze somigliante

Cusi leve e pesante

Son differenti. Plaze dunque ag boni.

Ubald.—Perche a ciascun suo piace somigliante

Cosi e lieve il pesante

Se differenti piace dunque a buoni.

³³ Harl. MS.—servire.³⁴ All.—om.³⁵ All.—tolle. Ubald.—tole.³⁶ All.—prezzo.³⁷ All.—cusi.³⁸ All. and Ubald.—Di quel che fa des.³⁹ Harl. MS. omits the "si." All. reads "chi compreso è."⁴⁰ Harl. MS.—daro ghanza.⁴¹ Harl. MS.—prosuma valer tanto. All.—the same, only "presume" instead of "prosuma."⁴² All.—pianzer.⁴³ All.—Perch' omo encappa

tal or e non cade. Ubald.—the same, except "inciampa," for "encappa."

Folle, chi cher⁴⁴ d' offesa perdonanza,
 E mentre⁴⁵ offende con celato manto,
 Perchè l' offeso alquanto,
 Dimostri⁴⁶ non veder chi dietro⁴⁷ 'l trade.
 Saggio, chi ben⁴⁸ misura
 La sua⁴⁹ operazione;⁵⁰
 E 'nnanzi le prepone,⁵¹
 Esempio fa, com' uom⁵² ricevitore.
 Saggio, chi si⁵³ procura
 Viver⁵⁴ ogni stagione,⁵⁵
 In modo che ragione
 Vinca 'l voler, e quei⁵⁶ ne va col fiore.
 Saggio, chi l' uom⁵⁷ non giudica⁵⁸ per veste,⁵⁹
 Ma per lo far che 'n lui si sente e vede;
 Saper⁶⁰ talor si rede,⁶¹
 Per apparenza tal⁶² che dentro è vano.
 Saggio, l' uom circondato⁶³ da tempeste,⁶⁴
 Quel che scampar non può, pure 'n Dio crede,⁶⁵
 Avendo sempre fede,
 Che doppo 'l moto⁶⁶ può trovare 'l piano.⁶⁷
 Guai, poichè il⁶⁸ mio danno
 Dir non m' è conceduto;
 Perchè oggi⁶⁹ e vil tenuto,
 Schivando i vizij,⁷⁰ 'l animo⁷¹ gentile.⁷²
 Grave m' è per inganno;⁷³
 Trovandomi traduto,
 Convenirmi star muto,
 Richiede⁷⁴ 'l ver talor segreto stile.
 Folle fui, quando in falsi⁷⁵ mi comissi,
 Chi vuol fuggir malvagi⁷⁶ vive solo:
 Padre inganna⁷⁷ figliuolo;
 Chi non⁷⁸ si fida via miglior⁷⁹ elegge:
 Saggio⁸⁰ non son, ma quel ch' altrui promissi
 Sempr' ho servato,⁸¹ e dico nullo dolo.⁸²
 Vorrei servire ruolo;⁸³
 Dio tratti altrui per qual me⁸⁴ tratta legge.

⁴⁴ Harl. MS.—chiede. ⁴⁵ Harl. MS.—Eso più. ⁴⁶ All.—Demostri.

⁴⁷ All.—drieto.

⁴⁸ Harl. MS. inserts a "si."

⁴⁹ Harl. MS. has "In ogni op." ⁵⁰ All.—operazione.

⁵¹ All.—E sempre a se prepone. Ubald.—the same, only he reads "propone."

⁵² All. and Ubald.—Se mentre fa come ricevitore.

⁵³ All.—e l' om che. Ubald.—the same.

⁵⁴ Harl. MS.—A viver.

⁵⁵ All.—stasone. ⁵⁶ All.—quel.

⁵⁷ All.—l' om.

⁵⁸ All.—zudicha. ⁵⁹ All. and Ubald.—vesta.

⁶⁰ All. and Ubald.—saver.

⁶¹ All. and Ubald.—crede. ⁶² All.—en tal.

⁶³ All.—l' om circondato. Ubald.—circondato.

⁶⁴ All. and Ubald.—tempesta.

⁶⁵ All.—se en don concede. Ubald. omits the "en."

⁶⁶ All.—doppo monte. Ubald.—dopo morte.

⁶⁷ Ubald.—trovarlo piano.

⁶⁸ Harl. MS.—Guai che pocho mio. All.—Guai o poichè.

⁶⁹ All.—ozi.

⁷⁰ All.—vicij.

⁷¹ All.—anemo.

⁷² All.—zentile.

⁷³ All.—enganno.

⁷⁴ All.—Rechere.

⁷⁵ Ubald.—in fals uom. All.—en fals om.

⁷⁶ All.—malvasi. Ubald.—malvaggi.

⁷⁷ All. and Harl. MS.—enganna el.

⁷⁸ All.—men.

⁷⁹ Harl. MS.—viemiglioro.

⁸⁰ Ubald.—Saggio uom.

⁸¹ All.—sempre servay. Ubald.—osservai.

⁸² All.—e di zo nullo o dolo. Ubald.—e dico nullo dolo.

⁸³ All.—Vorey posare e volo. Ubald. reads "vorrei," instead of "vorey."

⁸⁴ All. and Ubald.—mi.

I.

Woe to the man, by torture bow'd,
 Forbid to speak his grief aloud ;
 Who in the furnace must the while
 Smooth his wrung features to the smile !
Woe to the man whose agony
 Must leave unnamed his enemy ;
 Compell'd before his fellest foe
 His haughty, humbled frame to bow !
Woe—*Woe* to him, the wretch who hath
 Set his whole weal on others' faith ;
 Fearing each wind, without a hope
 To see defined his being's scope,
 He falleth from his high estate
 Low in the dust disconsolate !
Woe to the slave, the voluntary slave,
 Who friendship forming straight the fruit would crave.
 By specious views of interest led astray,
 He finds too late his labour thrown away.

II.

Hard 'tis to brook the injury
 Whence honour and respect should be.
Hard too, to upright mind, to rue
 The just rebuke, the censure true,
 To faults perchance of others due. }
Hard with the vicious to remain,
 And yet your innocence retain ;
 For use will weaken constancy,
 Vain e'en on virtue to rely, }
 Best to abandon them and fly !
Hard 'tis, but oh ! most chiefly to the good,
 To please of different men the various mood.
 Discord ensues ; and lo ! your plans are cross'd,
 Your hopes confounded and your labour lost.

III.

Fool he whose longings pleasure crave,
 Who constitutes himself its slave ;
 Who right defends not, since the sway
 Fortune can give or take away.
Fool, who, unpaid the price, would fain
 From him who sells his purpose gain ;
 Or who expects offended foe
 Guerdon will yield, and not the blow.
Fool he, the arrogant and vain,
 Pleased his own merits to maintain,
 Who throws a scornful glance on all,
 And deems who trips must always fall.
Fool too, who, when the injurious act is o'er,
 Would pardon ask, and so offend still more ;
 Nor know that where no grievous harm is done,
 The wrong'd one rather would not see the wrong.

IV.

Wise he who always in his need
 Measures his strength before the deed ;
 So doth the clerk, with caution meet,
 First check the account, then give receipt.

Wise he who steels his soul to dare
 The ills the changing seasons bear,
 And subjects unto reason's pow'r
 Passion that fadeth with the flow'r.
Wise, who would not by garments scan,
 But value by his acts the man;
 Who can by outward show see plain
 The mind how shallow and how vain.
Wise, who, in peril when the wild winds rave,
 And the loud ocean threatens the wat'ry grave,
 And when no mortal strength avails to save,
 Still firmly trusts in God without alarm,
 That to the tempest shall succeed the calm.

V.

Woe—Woe, that lightest breath may ne'er
 My cruel nameless wrong declare;
 All gentle worth, of vice the foe,
 Now in the dust is trampled low.
Hard 'tis to find my trust betray'd,
 Of others' treach'ry victim made;
 Tho' hush'd my voice, and mute my tongue,
 Still "secret style" doth ask* the wrong.
Fool, fool, the false for friends to own;
 Who'd shun the bad, must dwell alone.
 The father his own son deceives,
 Safest his course who none believes.
Wise I am not, but that my promise spoke,
 No wily art I used, no faith I broke.
 Still would I wish to tread the path I trod:
 As law of *man* treats me, so treat thou others, God!

This Canzone, both in the ancient MS. volume and in the printed Harleian Catalogue, is ascribed to Dante, although it is not even mentioned in any printed edition of his works. The transcriber, whoever he was, inserted it in his volume, and entitled it "Canzone di Dante,"—influenced probably by its terse phraseology, its adoption of pithy epigrammatic and proverbial sayings, (the Comedy abounds with such,) its bitterness, its energy, its artificial construction, its strange mixture of vindictive and religious feeling, the remarkable line with which it concludes, and its accordance in many particulars with ascertained facts in the life of Dante. And if there are some allusions which do not, at the present day, appear to be so explicable,—and, indeed, the period which intervenes between Dante's ceasing to act with the Bianchi and his appearance in the character of a decided Ghibellin is very obscure to us,—still that probably was not so at the time when the MS. was transcribed. According to many biographers of Dante, he separated himself from the Bianchi about the year 1304; the cause assigned is the ill-will borne to him on account of his having dissuaded them from assembling their friends in the winter of that year,—the consequence being, that before the summer arrived they were dispersed and

* "Richiede 'l ver," say all the texts, otherwise it might be suspected that the word ought to be read by the change of a single letter, 'richiude.'

the party broken up.* To some period not long subsequent might have been referred the composition of the Canzone.

Still, notwithstanding the positive assertion of the transcriber of the ancient MS., and the acquiescence of the compiler of the Harleian Catalogue,—notwithstanding the intrinsic merit of the composition, and its occasional approximation to the Dantesque style, however true it may be of its author, that he too—

“ Was tutor'd into Poesy by wrong,
And learnt in suffering what he taught in song,”—

the Canzone, nevertheless, is not the composition of him who has been aptly termed by an elegant writer of our own day,

“ Dell'ira gran maestro e del sorriso.”

It proceeded, however, from a contemporary of Dante, the Siennese, Bindo Bonichi, very few of whose productions have been printed—and those few, it is believed, are now rarely met with. His name is as little known; it is not to be found in the “Bibliothèque Universelle,” in Corniani, nor, it is believed, in Tiraboschi. His printed poems comprise thirteen Sonnets and five Canzoni: all the former, and three of the latter, are included in the “Raccolta de' Poeti Antichi,” published by the Cardinal Allacci at Naples, A.D. 1661, from MSS. in the libraries of the Vatican and the Barberini family. They had all of them been previously subjected to the careful consideration of various literati and learned Academies of the day. The MSS. were found to be written in the character of the age in which the different writers lived.

The Canzone in question had been previously published by Ubaldini in a volume containing some poems of Petrarch, and the “Tesoretto” of Brunetto Latini.

Both the printed copies differ from the Harleian MS. in dialect, in particular words—nay, sometimes in whole sentences. Allacci gives the poem in the Lombard, Ubaldini in the purer, the Harleian MS. in the coarser, dialect of Tuscany: still, in several instances, where there is a material discrepancy in the sense, the latter seems the preferable text.

Bindo Bonichi was buried in Sienna, A.D. 1337: some particulars respecting him are said to have been preserved by the earlier annotators on the “Decameron.” As to the merits of his writings, Ubaldini regards them as evincing a true vein of poetical feeling, as characterized by a nobility of thought; and concludes by remarking, that had Bonichi been as distinguished by propriety of diction as of sentiment, he would certainly be entitled to take his place not far from Petrarch. His Sonnets have, it is said, sustained less injury from the transcribers than his Canzoni, all of which have the same metrical arrangement,—one, as has been already observed, not very much used.

* Opere, tom. VI. p. 702, in note. Florence ed. 1830—41.

CHRONOLOGY

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS OF DANTE.

† denotes that the statement to which it is prefixed is subject to doubt.

A. D.	Popes.	Emperors.	Principal Events of Dante's Life.	Contemporary Events.
1264	.	.	.	Farinata degl' Uberti dies.
1265	Clement IV.	Richard Duke of York, and Alphonso, King of Castile, both were Kings of Rome.	Dante born, and baptized in the church of S. Giovanni at Florence.	
1266	.	.	.	Feb. 26. Battle of Beneventum and death of Manfred.
1267	.	.	.	Peace between the Guelfs and Ghibellins, the latter return to Florence; intermarriages between the two parties. King Charles succours the Guelfs with 800 French knights, under the leadership of Guido di Monfort. The Ghibellins leave Florence the day before Easter Sunday. The Florentines grant the Signory to King Charles for ten years. His Vicar governs in his name, aided by twelve Buonomini chosen by the citizens. All Tuscany, except Pisa and Sienna, revolts to the Guelfs.
1269	.	.	.	June. The Siennese and other Ghibellins, led by Provenzano Salvani, and Count Guido Novello, are defeated by the Florentines and the Vicar of King Charles near Colle di Val d'Elsa. Provenzano Salvani captured and slain.
1271	Gregory X.	.	.	
1273	.	Rodolph of Hapsburg.	.	
1274	.	.	May 1. Dante first meets Beatrice Portinari.	
1276	Innocent V. Adrian V. Gregory XI. John XXI.	.	.	
1277	Nicholas III.	.	.	

A. D.	Popes.	Emperors.	Principal Events of Dante's Life.	Contemporary Events.
1278	.	.	.	<i>Oct.</i> The Cardinal Latino Frangipani, Legate of Nicholas III., sent to Florence to reconcile the Guelfs and Ghibellins.
1279	.	.	.	<i>Feb.</i> Convention between the two parties in front of the church of S. Maria Novella.
1281	Martin IV.	.	.	
1282	.	.	.	<i>March 30.</i> Sicilian Vespers. The French driven from Sicily.
1288	Nicholas IV.	.	.	Count Ugolino della Gherardesca is thrown into a dungeon, and dies of famine.
1289	.	.	<i>June 11.</i> Dante takes part in the battle of Campaldino.— <i>Aug.</i> War with Pisa; Dante present at the taking of Caprona.— <i>Dec. 31.</i> Folco di Riconverto Portinari, father of Beatrice, dies.	War with Pisa.
1290	.	.	<i>June 9.</i> Beatrice dies; † Vita Nuova commenced; first idea of the Divine Comedy.	
1291	.	.	Dante marries Gemma Donati.	
1292	See vacant	Adolph, Count of Nassau.		
1293	.	.	.	The Guelfs paramount in Tuscany.— <i>Feb. 15.</i> Change of constitution in Florence by Giano della Bella. The Grandi excluded from power by the Ordinances of Justice. First creation of the office of Gonfalonier of Justice.
1294	St. Celestin Boniface VIII.	.	Dante's preceptor, Ser Brunetto Latini, dies.	Peace between Florence and Pisa.
1295	.	.	.	<i>Jan.</i> Giano della Bella banished. Messer Corso Donati accused of homicide, escapes through the corruption of a Judge.
1297	.	.	Dante matriculated in the Company of Physicians to evade the Ordinances of Justice.	Contest between Boniface VIII. and the Colonna; the latter are excommunicated. Dispute between the Pope and Philip the Fair, King of France.
1298	.	Albert of Austria.		
1300	.	.	Great dissensions at Florence. The Captains of the Guelf Party send two embassies to Rome; † Dante probably ambassador.	Commencement of the factions of the Bianchi and Neri, which sprung from feuds in the city of Pistoja between two branches of the family Cancellieri.

A. D.	Popes.	Emperors.	Principal Events of Dante's Life.	Contemporary Events.
1300	.	.	June 15. Dante elected Prior. † Divine Comedy already begun.	In Florence, Vieri de' Cerchi heads the Bianchi, and Corso Donati the Neri. The Captains of the Guefts send two embassies to Rome. Cardinal Matteo d'Acquasparta, Legate of the Pope, endeavours to adjust the differences without success. They spread to the rural districts. Conspiracy of Corso Donati to subject the people and the Bianchi by aid of the Pope. Several of the leaders of each party (amongst others, Corso Donati and Guido Cavalcanti) banished by the advice of Dante.
1301	.	.	Dante in Rome. The Bianchi are expelled from Florence.	Guido Cavalcanti, friend of Dante, dies. Fresh conspiracy of the Neri. Corso again banished, but he returns with his followers, and the Neri gain the ascendancy. Charles of Valois, on his way to attack Sicily, goes to Rome and then to Naples. Disputes between the Pope and the King of France.
1302	.	.	Dante whilst in Rome is sentenced for barratry during his Priorate, for hostility to the Pope and Charles of Valois; he is banished for pretended contumacy in not appearing, by the Podestà Cante de' Gabrielli; his house and property are confiscated. He takes refuge with Uguccone della Faggiuola and Bartolommeo della Scala. His second sentence, dated March, 1302, condemns him to be burnt if found within Florentine territory.	April. The Bianchi are entirely expelled from Florence.
1303	St. Benedict	.	.	Sept. Boniface VIII., in consequence of his dispute with Philip the Fair, is seized as a prisoner and confined in Anagni by Guglielmo di Nogaret and Sciarra Colonna. He is liberated by the people, and returns to Rome, where he dies, Oct. 12.
1304	See vacant	.	Dante at Bologna, † writes the first trattato of the Convito, and commences the first book De Vulgari Eloquio.	Feuds amongst the Neri between the old and new nobility, owing to the pride of Corso.—March 10. Fra Niccolò da Ostia, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia, arrives and endea-

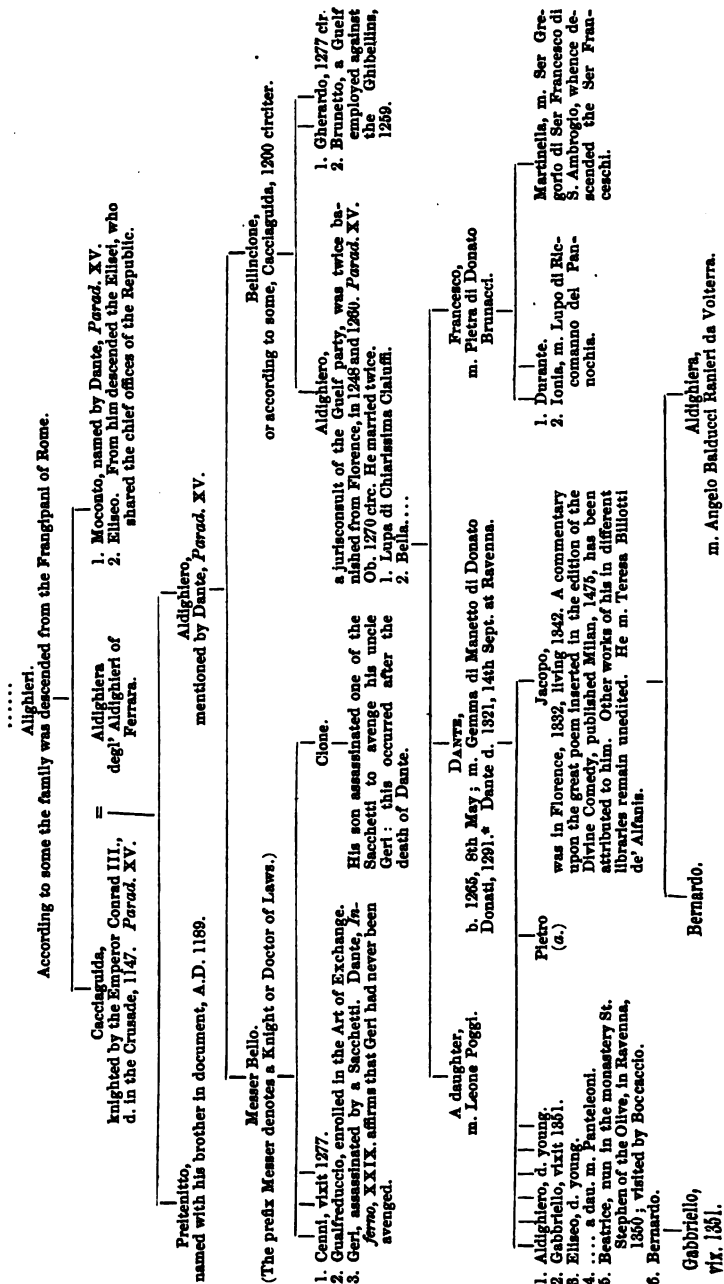
A. D.	Popes.	Emperors.	Principal Events of Dante's Life.	Contemporary Events.
1304	.	.	.	vours to effect peace. He favours the Bianchi.— <i>June 4.</i> Leaves Florence without having effected his object.— <i>June 10.</i> Dissensions between the old nobility and rich burghers. Brawls ensue in the streets. Ser Neri Abbati, Prior di San Piero Scheraggio, fires a house in Orsan Michele: more than 1700 palaces, towers and houses, and an immense quantity of property destroyed.
1305	Clement V. Holy See translated to France.	.	<i>July 22.</i> The Ghibellines and Bianchi († Dante with them) march upon Florence with white banners and olive branches, crying "Peace." They are repulsed by the people and obliged to fly.	
1306	.	.	Dante at Padua, whence he proceeds to the Malispina in the Lunigiana.— <i>Oct. 6.</i> Present at a convention between some of that family and the Bishop of Luni; † goes as ambassador to the Commune of S. Gimignano.	
1307	.	.	The earlier cantos of the <i>Inferno</i> are found in Florence, and forwarded by Dino Frescobaldi to the Marquis Moroello Malispina. Dante proceeds with the poem, and completes a great part of the <i>Inferno</i> . He is present at the meeting of the Bianchi in S. Gaudenzio.	
1308	.	Henry VII. of Luxemburg, amongst the Emperors he ranks as Henry VI.	Dante in the monastery of Santa Croce del Corvo, near the Gulf of Spezia. He leaves the <i>Inferno</i> with the Prior Hilario and proceeds to Paris, where he remains two years.	<i>Sept. 15.</i> Corso Donati by his haughtiness and tyranny incurs general odium. He is sentenced for treason and rebellion. The people arm against him. He is slain near the Badia di San Salvi.
1310	.	.	Letter of Dante addressed to the people and Princes of Italy, calling upon them to aid the Emperor.	
1311	.	.	Dante in the Casentino writes a letter to the Emperor, then in Lombardy,	League of Florence, Bologna and the Tuscan Guelfs against Henry VII.— <i>Oct.</i> They re-

A. D.	Popes.	Emperors.	Principal Events of Dante's Life.	Contemporary Events.
1311	.	.	and in the name of the Florentine exiles incites him to march upon Tuscany. He addresses another epistle to the Florentines, rebuking them as rebels.	fuse to receive his ambassadors.— <i>Nov.</i> Henry cites the Florentines to appear before him at Genoa.— <i>Dec.</i> 24. He condemns them as rebels, and deprives them of their liberties and franchises. The Florentine merchants in Genoa are compelled to depart—their property is confiscated. King Robert sends succours to Florence. Henry VII. dies at Buonconvento.
1312	.	Henry VIII. or seventh Emperor of that name.		
1313	.	Interregnum in the Empire until 1326, when Louis of Bavaria is elected.	Dante writes the treatise <i>De Monarchiâ</i> .	
1314	See vacant.	Frederick of Austria and Louis of Bavaria elected Kings of the Romans.	Dante at Pisa. Writes a letter to the Cardinals, urging them to elect an Italian Pope. †Dante at Lucca completes the <i>Purgatorio</i> , probably commenced in 1310.	The Ghibellins again formidable in Tuscany. The Pisans, led by Ugucione della Faggiuola, possess themselves of Lucca, and seize the treasures of the Church party there deposited.
1315	.	.	Last sentence against Dante, in effect mitigating the two former sentences.	Ugucione della Faggiuola makes war against the Florentines.— <i>Aug.</i> 22. Battle of Montecatini, the Florentines and their Guelf allies, led by the two brothers of King Robert, are defeated by Ugucione.
1316	John XXII.	.	Dante at the Court of Can Grande composes and dedicates the <i>Paradiso</i> to that Prince.	The Florentine Guelfs divided amongst themselves—some favouring, others opposing, the French and King Robert.— <i>April</i> 10. Lucca rebels against Ugucione. He is driven from Lucca and Pisa. Castruccio Castrucani is elected Captain of the People at Lucca.
1317	.	.	Dante refuses to return to Florence on humiliating conditions.	

A. D.	Popes.	Emperors.	Principal Events of Dante's Life.	Contemporary Events.
1318	.	.	Dante in the Monastery of Fonte Avellana, in the vicinity of Gubbio in Umbria, and afterwards with Busone de' Raffaelli da Gubbio.	
1319	.	.	Dante in Udine at the Court of Pagano della Torre, where he completes the <i>Paradiso</i> .	
1320	.	.	Dante in Ravenna at the Court of Guido da Polenta, by whom he is said to have been appointed ambassador to Venice.	
1321	.	.	<i>Sept. 14.</i> Dante dies in Ravenna.	

GENEALOGY OF THE FAMILY ALIGHIERI.

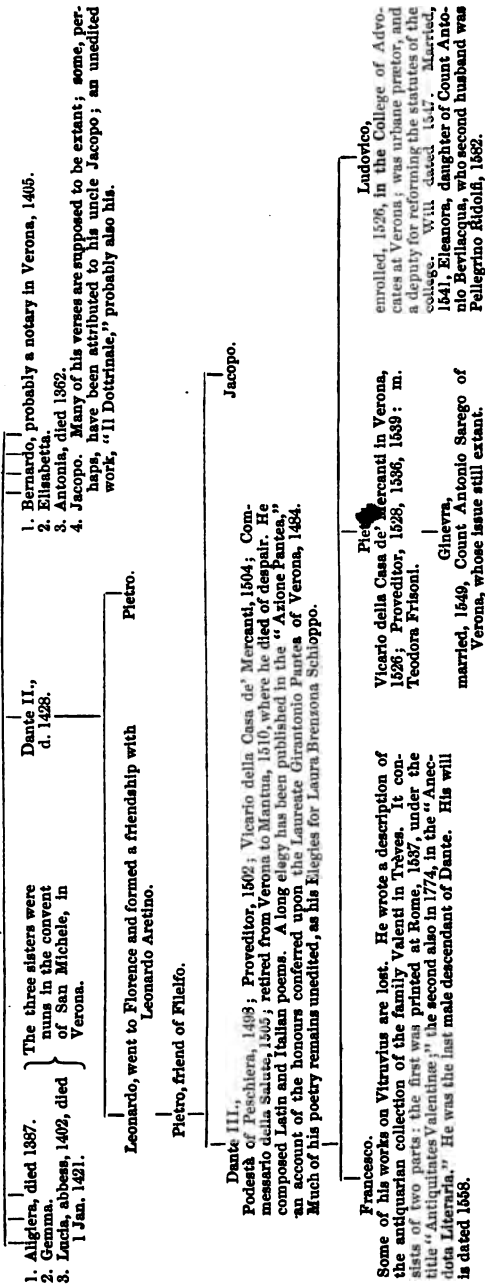
From Pompéo Litta, *Famiglie celebri, and from Giuseppe Pelli, Memorie per servire alla Vita di Dante.*



(a.)

Pietro.

He shared his father's exile, went to Sienna, and afterwards to Bologna, where he was distinguished for legal acquirements. After his father's death he settled at Verona, and was appointed Giudice by the Commune. In 1361 he was made Vicario dell' Collegio de' Giudici: d. at Treves, 1361, where a magnificent mausoleum was erected to his memory in the cloister of the monastery St. Margherita: the inscription alone has been preserved, it is in the Chapter Library. He wrote a commentary upon his father's poem; but the learned dispute the genuineness of the one now cited as his. He married Jacopo, who died 1338.

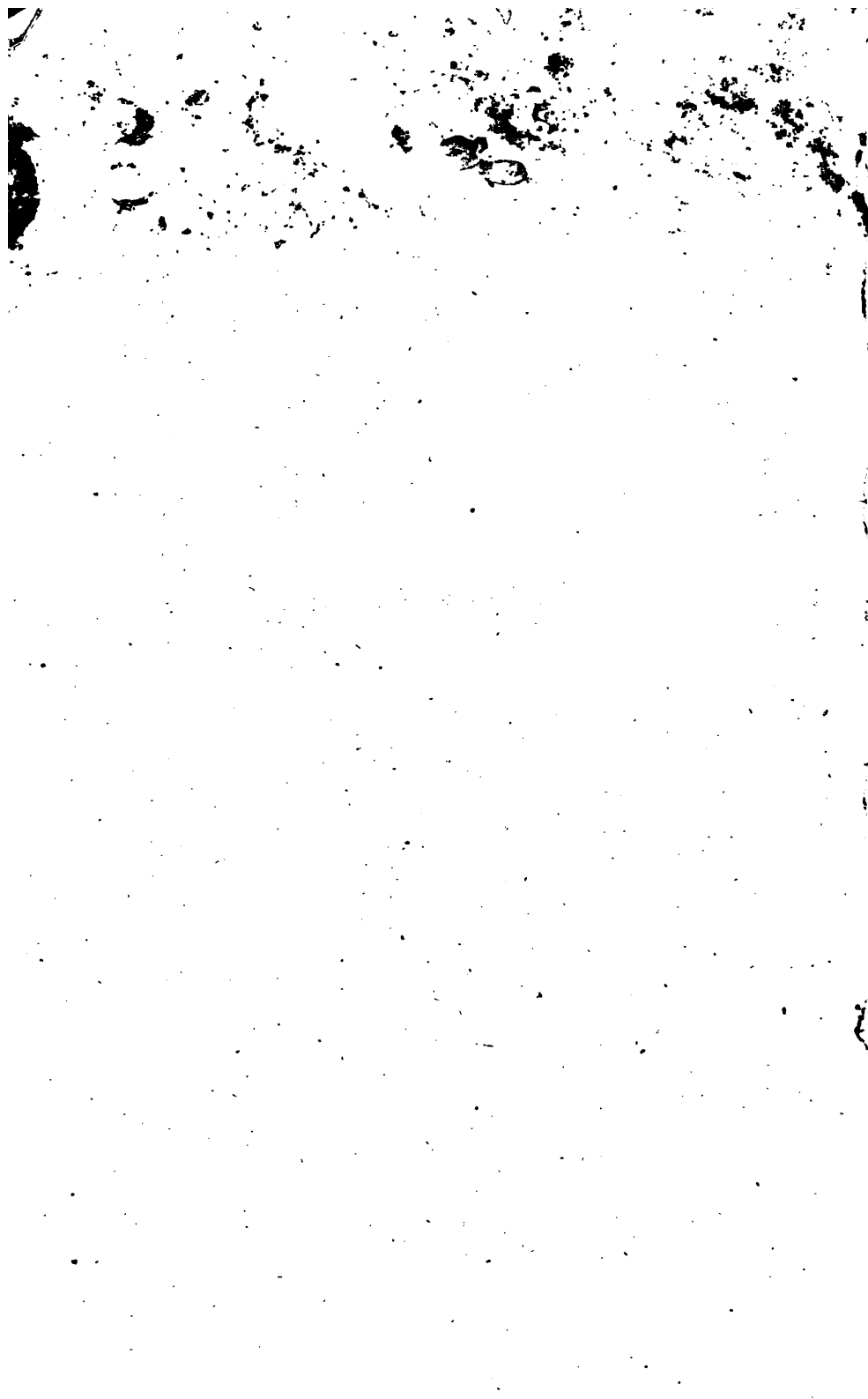


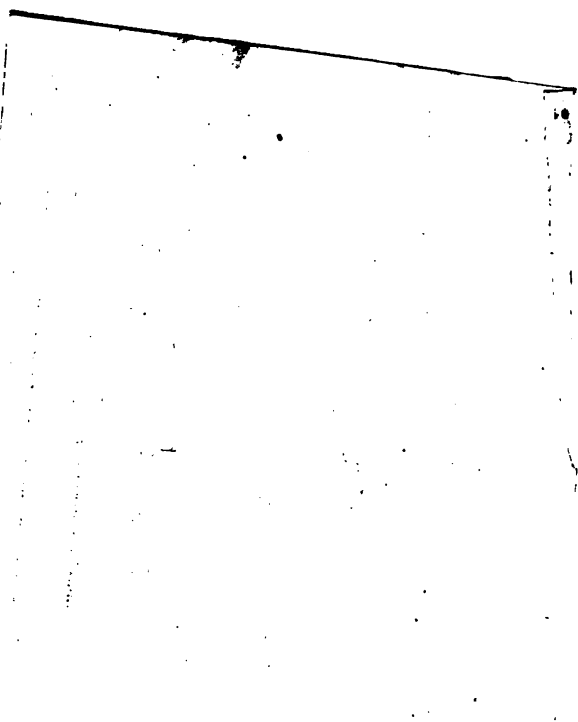
* Gemma survived her husband, but was not living A.D. 1332, 16 May. See *Pelli Memorie*, p. 34-5, in note.

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